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**Self-presentation, Representation, and a Reconsideration of *Cosa nostra*  
through the Expanding Narratives of Tommaso Buscetta**

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**by**

**Amanda Rose Bush**

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## **Dedication**

I dedicate this disseration to Phoebe, my big sister and biggest supporter.  
Your fierce intelligence and fearless pursuit of knowledge, adventure, and happiness  
have inspired me more than you will ever know, as individual and as scholar.

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## **Abstract**

### **Self-presentation, Representation, and a Reconsideration of *Cosa nostra* through the Expanding Narratives of Tommaso Buscetta**

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This dissertation explores the narratives of Tommaso Buscetta (Italy's first *pentito* from *Cosa nostra*) as an exemplum of historically dominant discourses on organized crime. Departing from Buscetta's 1984 Depositions, this dissertation aims to fill a void in existing scholarship on the representation of organized crime across media. The author argues that Tommaso Buscetta, both in his own self-modelling and in the subsequent narratives that arose from his collaboration with the Italian State, can be read as a continuity with literarily produced narratives of a noble mafia and in which the *mafioso* represents honor, dignity, and respect.

Based on archival research on Buscetta's depositions, print news media during the 1986 Maxi Trial of Palermo, and on literary and media research into the offspring narratives (biographies and docudramas, mainly), this dissertation provides an analysis of the tenacity of apologist mafia narratives and their implications in the historical world. Through theoretical engagement with recent studies on autobiography, co-authorship, celebrated criminality, and docudrama, the author of this dissertation provides the first study of Tommaso Buscetta as a transmedia icon.

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### *Why Tommaso Buscetta?*

In April of 1986, a man previously unknown to international audiences took the witness stand at the courtroom bunker of Palermo's Ucciardone prison. He was the star witness in the Italian state's largest trial against the Sicilian mafia, *Cosa nostra*. Almost five hundred Mafiosi were under the scrutiny of justice at this trial while this man, Tommaso Buscetta, a self-defined Mafioso, was flown in secrecy from the U.S. to sit as their accuser.

Tommaso Buscetta broke his alliances with *Cosa nostra* almost shortly after his arrest at his farm in Brazil in November 1983. In July of 1984 he began his collaboration with the Italian justice system, but only after his attempted suicide on the eve of his extradition to Italy.<sup>1</sup> He spoke daily for over a month with Giovanni Falcone, a prosecutor of Palermo's anti-mafia pool and future victim of *Cosa nostra's* assassination campaign.<sup>2</sup> The dramatic turn of events that arose from over a month's worth of interrogation has been immortalized across media since. The content and results of these meetings have since been represented and reproduced in media that range from contemporary printed press (both newspapers and tabloids), to co-authored biographies and pseudo-autobiographies, to fiction and documentary movies and series, to theatrical productions and comic books. Buscetta's transatlantic journey and arrival in Italy have come to signify the mafioso's decision to collaborate and is a useful starting point to analyze how, through the figure of Buscetta, various and at time conflicting visions of the Italian history come to light.

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<sup>1</sup> Alexander Stille, *Excellent Cadavers: The Mafia and the Death of the First Italian Republic* (Random House, 2011), 94.

<sup>2</sup> Posthumously, Giovanni Falcone, alongside his fellow Sicilian colleague Paolo Borsellino, has been immortalized in Italy as a symbol of legality, civil society, and the movement against *Cosa nostra*.

My research, based in archival research on Tommaso Buscetta's depositions, courtroom appearances, and the media portrayals in the period after the Maxi Trial, shifts existing academic focus away from the entities of 'Mafia' and 'Anti-Mafia.' Instead, I aim to explore the boundary between the two and how it is negotiated through narratives surrounding the man made infamous for crossing this border. I provide a new reading of the time period and how this border is, in fact, as permeable as the constructed wall between State and Mafia itself. I consider Buscetta as both a historical and literary character and a lens through which to view what is commonly considered as the era of the Italian state's most engaged treatment of Sicilian organized crime. I aim to show how Buscetta fits into a preexisting and predictable literary mafia imaginary and how, hence, became a powerful token through which media narrates the Mafia. Considering how fictional media have portrayed Buscetta and how his presence serves to shape cultural memory of the period, I examine how documentary aesthetics further depictions of the *pentito* and help to create pointed and in-depth evaluations of State successes and failures in their treatment of the mafia.

Buscetta and the time period around the Maxi Trial have been discussed at length in a variety of contexts, but by tracing the development of his narrative over a period of over thirty years (and the continuities it maintains with literary narratives), I consider how this narrative has become embedded in Italian media culture and is used for a variety of purposes, political and non. In Chapter 1, I discuss Buscetta's depositions through the lens of performative autobiography, considering the literary topoi and cultural tropes that contribute to the self-made myth of Buscetta. In Chapter 2, I analyze three co-produced interview-autobiographies through theories of Collaborative Autobiography, aiming to

understand how initial written narratives on the *pentito* further contribute to Buscetta's monument of the self. In Chapter 3, I rely on contemporary news reports from the Maxi Trial and theories of Celebrated Criminality to consider Buscetta as a Celebrity Criminal of the 'Robin Hood' type, according to framework implemented by Dr. Paul Kooistra in *Criminals as Heroes* (1989). In Chapter 4, the culminating chapter of this dissertation and a starting point for future research, I discuss feature films that return to the historical period of the Maxi Trial and, particularly, to the Buscetta-Falcone pairing. Focusing on the usage of documentary aesthetics within these works, I assess how the figure of Buscetta has become an indelible image to evaluate a clamorous phase of Italian history.

### *Historical Background*

Buscetta's revelations became the topic of contemporary news and caught public attention on a national and international level. For the first time, a high level mafioso had broken with the mandate of *omertà*, or the mafia code of silence, and collaborated to bring down the criminal organization. The survival of *Cosa nostra* throughout the centuries is owed not only to the organization's cunning as it continuously transformed itself, but, above all, to the unwritten 'law of silence' surrounding it. This law was deeply engrained not only within the mafia but was traditionally represented as a Sicilian cultural rule of thumb—better to turn a blind eye and bite one's tongue than meddle in other's affairs. The price of breaking the law of *omertà*, even for civilians, was usually paid for both physically and symbolically; through the elimination of an *infame* the mafia both removes the threat that an individual will continue to speak and sends a warning sign to others of the danger

of speaking out.<sup>3</sup> For a Mafioso, the outcome of breaking *omertà* was equally violent: it resulted in his brutal death and the posthumous destruction of his reputation. As Letizia Paoli notes in *Mafia Brotherhoods*, “The core of this code [of *omertà*] consists in the categorical prohibition of collaboration with state authorities or reliance on their services, even when one has been victim of a crime.”<sup>4</sup>

By going against the strict cultural norms of his environment, Buscetta risked both his reputation and his life; it is a decision that he speaks of at length in his depositions, reconciling the conflict between his past and present. In the decades since Buscetta’s collaboration, state collaboration has become much more prominent.<sup>5</sup> While before there was no formal witness protection program, the Italian judiciary now has a system modeled after the system used in the United States.<sup>6</sup> Those who work with the state and provide verifiable and useful information are now offered penal reductions for their own crimes, relocation services, and new identities. When Buscetta made the decision to work with the Italian state, however, there was no guarantee that he would have any of these securities, at least from Italy. Because he was also asked to testify in the *Pizza Connection* trial on behalf of the American FBI, he came under the protection of the American Witness Protection Program. Without information to supply across the Atlantic, his fate would have been left to the discretion of the police with whom he worked, who lawfully would have no obligation to keep him from harm in prison at the hands of those he had just betrayed.

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<sup>3</sup> In mafia morality it is considered both valorous and virtuous to “mind one’s own business”; those who do not are referred to as ‘infame’ or rather, of the worst reputation.

<sup>4</sup> Letizia Paoli, *Mafia Brotherhoods: Organized Crime, Italian Style* (Oxford University Press, 2008), 109.

<sup>5</sup> In the years after Buscetta’s collaboration, several hundred Mafiosi broke *omertà* and began to work with the justice system, because of his influence. Stille, 7.

<sup>6</sup> Stille, 91-93.

The importance of Buscetta's collaboration is made clear through the culmination of his narration: the Maxi Trial. While the newly founded Anti-Mafia Pool had been working to understand the complexity of the organization, there was a limit to the hypotheses. The anti-mafia pool was set up by Judge Antonio Caponetto in 1983 upon his arrival in Palermo after the murder of Judge Rocco Chinnici.<sup>7</sup> Caponetto mobilized forces and created a team of magistrates dedicated to the mafia problem. According to Stille, the magistrates "would dedicate themselves exclusively to the mafia cases and share information collectively. Used successfully in the prosecution of terrorism, the 'pool' concept reduced the risk of any single magistrate becoming the exclusive repository of dangerous secrets of the target of retaliation."<sup>8</sup>

The Pool had made great leaps in understanding the extent of organized crime, and was the best attempt at comprehending and defeating the mafia since the 'Iron Prefect' Cesare Mori had been sent to Sicily to address this problem under Fascism. During the Fascist biennial, Mussolini sent Mori to eradicate the mafia as it was a challenge to the fascist hegemony; this task involved the extensive use of internal exile, hard sentences to presumed bandits and mafiosi, and even compensation for those who betrayed a mafioso leading to his arrest. Mori's campaign left ample space for mafiosi to use the government to settle private vendettas through the arrest of their adversaries, and did not reach the root of the mafia phenomenon.<sup>9</sup> While Mori declared the Mafia as having been defeated, it has

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<sup>7</sup> Rocco Chinnici's death was not the only one related to mafia investigations. State representatives killed by the mafia were dubbed as the 'Excellent Cadavers,' revealing the extent to which *Cosa nostra* relied on performing their crimes unhindered.

<sup>8</sup> Stille, 89.

<sup>9</sup> For an in-depth analysis of the effects of the Fascist biennial on organized crime, see Stille Ch. 1, Schneider & Schneider Ch. 1.

since been questioned how much of his success was owed to his tactics and how much was simply because, with the lack of elections, the mafia no longer could interact with the government through the guarantee of voters and the favors that they expected in return.

Since the end of Fascist rule there had been no serious acknowledgement of the extent of mafia activities and, hence, there had been a very laissez-faire attitude towards the problem of organized crime in Sicily. In other cases (such as in the Allied landing in Sicily) government officials actually worked with and protected the sect when it served their interests.<sup>10</sup> According to Giovanni Falcone, and a plethora of scholars, his meetings with Buscetta represented a turning point in the state's ability to address the problem of organized crime.<sup>11</sup> While before Buscetta there had been vast silence from members of the mafia, his collaboration allowed the anti-mafia pool to confirm what they had deduced through their new approach (following the American tactic) of monitoring bank accounts known to belong to suspected mafiosi and their close family members.<sup>12</sup> By tracing large deposits and withdrawals dating from the 'Sack of Palermo' of the 1950s-60s through the booming years of black market heroin trade (1970s-80s), prosecutors were able to

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<sup>10</sup> See Stille, Chapter 1.

<sup>11</sup> Speaking of the role of Buscetta, Falcone writes "Prima di lui, non avevo- non avevamo- che un'idea superficiale del fenomeno mafioso. Con lui abbiamo cominciato a guardarvi dentro. Ci ha fornito numerosissime conferme sulla struttura, sulle tecniche di reclutamento, sulle funzioni di Cosa Nostra. Ma soprattutto ci ha dato una visione globale, a largo raggio del fenomeno. Ci ha dato una chiave di lettura essenziale, un linguaggio, un codice. È stato per noi come un professore di lingue che ti permette di andare ai turchi senza parlare con i gesti." Giovanni Falcone and Marcelle Padovani, *Cose di Cosa nostra* (Milano: Rizzoli, 1991), 52.

<sup>12</sup> A noteworthy case of a *pentito* before Buscetta is Leonardo Vitale, who, after his spontaneous confessions to law enforcement in 1972 was not only incarcerated for his own criminal activity but was also declared mentally unstable for the farfetched claims he made. Upon his release from a decade-long sojourn between jails and asylums he was murdered point blank by the mafia. His confessions were later verified by the Anti-Mafia Pool and Buscetta's own confessions. Vitale has come to represent the Italian state's enduring unwillingness and inability to treat the Sicilian mafia in a serious manner.

understand the flow of funds and conjecture the roles played by various characters within the mafia.<sup>13</sup>

Buscetta, however, was not a new name for mafia investigators. Implicated in the Strage di Ciaculli bombing of 1963, Buscetta lived as a fugitive in Switzerland, Mexico, Canada, and finally the United States. The Ciaculli bombing is considered to have been the end of the first mafia war. During this period of internal shifting of power dynamics, Buscetta was allegedly the next in line to take the place of a former boss, Angelo La Barbera. Salvatore Greco represented a threat to this power shift, and Buscetta and Pietro Torretta (with whom Buscetta would run the clan of Palermo city centre) had previously ambushed two adversaries in Torretta's home.<sup>14</sup> While Buscetta only in one instance makes mention of using violence, John Dickie notes that the period of the first mafia war was full of subtle events with open interpretations, and that "most of the subtleties involve Tommaso Buscetta."<sup>15</sup>

One of the hardest events to interpret took place on June 20, 1963. Law enforcement entities were dispatched to an abandoned Alfa Giulietta. The car, stuffed with TNT, was destined to the Grecos but brought demise to the seven officers that were there when its doors were opened. The investigations into this slaughter of police caused many mafiosi to flee. By 1968, investigators had filed a case against 114 presumed mafiosi (Catanzaro+113). Buscetta was charged (in his absence) with *associazione a delinquere* and

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<sup>13</sup> The financial endeavors of the mafia seem to have had no limits between widespread rackets and territorial control. The most lucrative of their businesses, however, lay in construction speculation during the post-war economic boom and in the illegal trafficking of cigarettes and, subsequently, narcotics.

<sup>14</sup> John Dickie, *Cosa nostra: A History of the Sicilian Mafia* (New York, NY: St. Martin's Press, 2015), 240-245.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid, 242.



sentenced to ten years of jailtime, later dropped to 8 years. By 1972, Buscetta was arrested for drug trafficking in Brazil, and was extradited to Italy to serve his time in jails throughout the country. Ultimately, by 1980 he was held in Torino and evaded his semi-liberty concessions and returned to Brazil. In October 1983, he was arrested in Brazil (again for drug trafficking), and by July of 1984 he had attempted suicide by ingesting strychnine and decided to collaborate with Judge Falcone. Despite these clamorous arrests and multiple accusations of drug trafficking, Buscetta “airbrushes drugs out of the picture and underplays his own cunning and aggressive role in the unfolding of hostilities.”<sup>16</sup>

What is it, instead, that made Buscetta’s declarations so important? While he was certainly not the most transparent or trustworthy of witnesses, he did provide a wealth of information that tipped the scales of justice to favor the anti-mafia. In addition to confirming magistrates’ hypotheses on the various clans (*cosche*, sing: *cosca*) of the Sicilian underworld, Buscetta’s confessions proved to be extremely influential within the culture of the mafia. Because of Buscetta’s high position in the organization, his collaboration was both a massive breach of the honor code, and a message sent to those in the lower ranks of the mafia. Before his collaboration the only collaborator (Leonardo Vitale) had been debased on the claim of insanity, but Buscetta was both believed and protected during and after his decision to speak. This combination of the efficacy of the Italian state in managing its key witness and the precedent having been set for a successful collaboration, fellow mafiosi who had become discontent with a variety of internal changes prompted a ‘landslide of pentiti’ in the years following 1984. By the time the Maxi Trial was to open in

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

early 1986, judge Falcone had secured the collaboration of Antonio Calderone, Salvatore Contorno, and Francesco Marino Mannoia, mafiosi from various levels (but always below Buscetta) of the organization. In the late 1980s and early 1990s the 'domino effect' provoked by Buscetta's collaboration, amongst other factors, yielded a quantity of 1000 collaborators under state protection by 1994, a quantity previously unimaginable.<sup>17</sup> The most useful information that Buscetta offered was an inside look into the previously hypothesized internal structure of *Cosa nostra*. While before there was no solid proof that the *cosche* ruling over different territories in and around Palermo were formally connected, Buscetta described their links in detail. The *cosche* were not merely occasional business partners in their construction speculation and black-market affairs, but were rather linked in a complex hierarchical structure reminiscent of a legitimate government.<sup>18</sup> This revelation of the interconnected nature of mafia crimes allowed prosecutors to use a new approach to prosecution. Proving the solidity of the organization meant that criminals could be tried in court as a group, no longer as individuals for specific and individual crimes. The results of Buscetta's confessions allowed prosecutors to issue arrest warrants for 366 mafiosi, a feat that would have been impossible without a confirmation of the hypothesized hierarchical structure of the families. Thus, in 1986, the Sicilian mafia was brought to court in the largest trial to date aimed at combatting organized crime in Italy.

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<sup>17</sup> La Licata, 75. In Francesco La Licata's essay in Alessandra Dino's edited volume, he describes the laws surrounding collaboration and attempts to delineate different types of *pentiti*, he describes Buscetta and the pentiti of the 1980s as 'organic collaborators' as they preceded the legal framework dedicated to mafia collaborators. La Licata describes the shift in pentitismo as it became a verified system and some of the outstanding cases that came along with the new laws to protect collaborators. Francesco La Licata, "Mafia, politica, pentiti". 63-80. 75. Dino, Alessandra, and Felia Allum. *Pentiti: I Collaboratori Di Giustizia, Le Istituzioni, L'opinione Pubblica*. Roma: Donzelli, 2006. Print.

<sup>18</sup> For an overview of the the formation of the *Cosa nostra* commission see Stille, Chapter 7.

The 'Maxi Trial', as it came to be dubbed, was a massive event. The trial became a national priority and a special 'courtroom bunker' was constructed outside of Palermo's Ucciardone prison, to which it was internally connected. The courtroom was built with reinforced concrete and was specifically designed to resist any possible bombings; it had ample space for the final 474 defendants in the trial.<sup>19</sup> In addition, it also had space for a massive audience.<sup>20</sup> Contractors had been employed from the Italian peninsula to construct the courtroom, to avoid the very likely risk that Sicilian contractors be corrupted by the same association that was being brought to trial. As an added security measure, some 3,000 soldiers were present for the beginning of the trial. The sheer number of participants (both willing and unwilling) in the trial is indicative of the importance of the event. That it garnered so much media attention and continues to fascinate audiences long after its closure is not surprising.

The period that I examine is historically significant for the spike it witnessed in magistrate-mafioso collaborations, and for the intensity of the legal action taken against the criminal organization. Additionally, the period is noteworthy in media history; the trial was the first televised on a national level and the 1980s also gave rise to the first narrative television series. My research begins with Buscetta's extradition in 1984, covers the period of the Maxi Trial, and extends to current day productions that posthumously build on what I refer to as the Buscetta monument.

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<sup>19</sup> The discrepancy between the 366 warrants and the 474 defendants is due to simultaneous investigations and collaborations that implicated individuals other than those in Buscetta's depositions.

<sup>20</sup> On the ground level of the courtroom there is space for as many as a thousand lawyers and witnesses, while in the balcony gallery there are another thousand seats for the press and the public. Stille, 154.

## *Existing Literature*

While there is no certainly no shortage of mafia related scholarship, there is to date no formal study of the portrayal the first *pentito* across popular media: this is the void I aim to fill. I will engage with sources that discuss mafia history, the rise of *pentitismo*, and the Mafia's changing portrayals in cinema, television, and documentary. For historical aspects of the Maxi Trial, I engage with Salvatore Lupo (*Storia della Mafia*), Alexander Stille's *Excellent Cadavers*, John Dickie's *Cosa Nostra: A History of the Sicilian Mafia* and Giovanni Falcone's memoir, *Cose di Cosa Nostra* to establish Buscetta's decisive role in the history of both the mafia and the Anti-Mafia. These texts examine the influence Buscetta exerted on the Italian state's capability to bring the mafia to trial.

Since the time of Italian Unification there has been a consistent public interest in Sicily's organized crime problem. In Roberto Dainotto's very recent publication, *Mafia: A Cultural History*, he traces the development of this interest through literature and, especially, popular media. While he focuses mostly on the American take on organized crime, with productions such as *The Godfather* trilogy and *The Sopranos*, his analysis of the development of the Mafia genre is very congenial to my arguments. In the chapters that examine Italian media (most memorably in the section of Chapter 4 where he discusses the TV show *La piovra*), Dainotto puts forth the idea that during the 1980s Italian media began to reconsider images of *mafiosità* as romanticizing and glorifying and instead proposed new figures of mafiosi as brutal criminals. Building on this idea, I would like to address how the figure of Buscetta is a catalyst in this change and negotiates the passage from mythic mobsters to mafiosi as methodical murderers. In addition to Dainotto's work I engage with Andrea Meccia's publication *MediaMafia* in which he specifically discusses developments in

portrayals of *Cosa nostra* on screen. His work shows the development of mafia narratives and considers mafia as a central theme in the cultural shift from cinema to television

Two other essential texts in providing a background for the mediatic evolution of the Mafia are Vittorio Albano's *La mafia nel cinema siciliano* and Dana Renga's *Unfinished Business: Screening the Mafia in the New Millenium*. Both of these texts make mention of the films I discuss and provide analyses of trends in mafia related cinema. These texts are invaluable in establishing the continuity of my research with past studies of mafia media. Where they are limited in their analysis of the films as they aim to provide a glossary of the changes in the genre, my approach to the topic places Buscetta as the object of inquiry as I aim to explore how this massive cultural change plays out on screen. I am less interested in the glorifying images of mafia born of the American tradition which these authors discuss (although I will inevitably consider American films like *The Godfather* for their importance in the development of the Italian mafia genre) and focus my analysis on how these stereotypes are filtered through a historical character post Maxi Trial. Through my studies of the real life Buscetta and the images of the *pentito* that have emerged, I analyze how the ambiguous character of a state collaborator has become an important token to understand the ideology behind a media product.

As asserted by Dainotto and Meccia, from the Maxi Trial forward, popular representations of the Mafia have abandoned the glorifying depiction of mafiosi and instead opted to show the true violence of the organization and make heroes of those who have stood up to denounce their power. The 'Mafia movie' of the past became the socially conscious 'Anti-Mafia movie' that denounces the brutality of the organization and its destructive effects on the civic life of the nation. The depiction of the Anti-Mafia, however,

seems to gloss over the decisive role of Buscetta and instead opts to glorify the judges with whom he worked, and the ‘mafia martyrs’ that were raised in its grips yet broke with their cultural norms to denounce the organization.<sup>21</sup> Buscetta, as supporting character, shapes this passage.

### *Methodology and Research Criteria*

This project spans disciplines and is hence rooted in diverse methodologies, depending on the direction in which primary sources guided my research. I make heavy use of formal literary analysis and theories of performative autobiography to analyze Buscetta’s self-presentation and stage presence both at trial and in subsequent television interviews. I use formal scene analysis and docu-drama theory to examine the treatment of the *pentito* in various mediums. Furthermore, I consider frameworks I will address historical, literary, media and performance studies as related to the larger fields of Mafia and Italian studies. My work will be a contribution to the field of Italian Studies and Mafia studies while addressing how Buscetta’s private story becomes part of the public domain of history.

The primary sources that I engage with have been selected through a variety of criteria. For the basis of a complete understanding of Buscetta’s self-presentation I analyze his very detailed depositions through formal literary analysis. From further archival research, I analyze contemporary printed press surrounding the trial, focusing on both national newspapers and tabloids (*La Repubblica*, *Il Corriere della sera*, *Panorama*) and

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<sup>21</sup> The films that I refer her to here include *La siciliana ribelle* (2008), *I cento passi* (2000), and *Placido Rizzotto* (2000), among others.

local editions (*Il Giornale di Sicilia*, published in Palermo). My primary fictional media sources, instead, have been selected with both historical and formal criteria. The corpus includes feature films that reflect on the period between 1984-1992, dates that coincide with Buscetta's role as collaborator. The unifying thread of these films is their depiction of Buscetta on screen. The diverse usage of this character leads me to conjecture that, independent of truth hood or falsity, Buscetta becomes a token character that different film makers and producers can effectively mold to aid them in their assessment of and critique the trial period.

### ***Chapter Division***

#### *Chapter 1: Echoes of a Literary Mafia in the Depositions of Italy's First 'Pentito'*

In the first chapter of my work I explore Buscetta's original *dichiarazioni* (deposition) to Giovanni Falcone and Gianni de Gennaro, of the Anti-Mafia pool. I discuss Buscetta's self-presentation and pay special interest to the self-proclaimed motives behind his long participation in *Cosa nostra*, the description of his decision to collaborate with justice, his contemplated language, and his descriptions of the changes in mafia mentality from his induction to his collaboration. Through an analysis of his extensive collaborations with justice, I consider Buscetta's passage from criminality to the law and from *omertà* to confessing as a performative literary endeavor that makes the character of Buscetta an ideal figure for adaptation as he feeds into preconceived notions of *mafiosità*. To this end, I perform comparative studies between Buscetta's confessions and existing literary portrayals of mafia mentality.

Buscetta's request to speak specifically with Falcone is telling; both Falcone's Palermitan background and his steadfast respect of the law made him a figure Buscetta both revered and trusted. In literary terms, the relationship is reminiscent of that between Don Mariano Arena and Captain Bellodi in Leonardo Sciascia's 1961 novel *Il giorno della civetta*. The pair had met once before in Brazil; Falcone, in a skilled manner, had approached the Mafioso but not mentioned the idea of a collaboration while alluding to the fact that the door was open.<sup>22</sup> In 1984, when Buscetta turned state's witness, there was no guarantee that the state had strong intentions of combatting the mafia, or that collaborators would be guaranteed any protection. By choosing to confess to Falcone, the well-established face of the Anti-Mafia, Buscetta cunningly assured his own safety, and that his declarations would be treated with utmost seriousness.

Buscetta's confessions often reveal a continuity with literary tropes in works that portray the mafia. In the first sentences he speaks he overturns the idea that he is betraying the mafia by breaking *omertà* and instead describes how, paradoxically, through his decision he is defending the values that coincided with the post-war organization that he had joined. These values included personal honor and the financial stability that would allow him to provide for his kin. He confirms the mythic mafia of the past and narrates the betrayal of the new mafia. This insistence on a traditional and honorable mafia had arisen on multiple occasions dating back to the time of Italian unification.<sup>23</sup> By bringing this trope to the foreground of his deposition, Buscetta positions himself as a moral character that had merely attempted to provide for his family through his illegal endeavors. He iterates

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<sup>22</sup> Stille, 97.

<sup>23</sup> See Dainotto, Mafia Cultural History Ch 1.



that he does not expect or desire favors in the justice system, but instead reveals his knowledge in an attempt to secure a better future for his children and the ‘future generations.’ Throughout Buscetta’s declarations he continuously returns to the myth of the valorous mafia of the past, and calls on the idea of a positive mafioso that both protects and provides for his clan, and ensures that the downtrodden in society are protected.

The myth of the valorous mafioso is a recurrent theme in Buscetta’s life story, but this myth can in reality be traced back to the first pieces of literature that address the mafia, and to the early court cases against the presumed criminals. Through an analysis of Buscetta’s depositions, I am lead to see a continuity with literary descriptions of the mafia: in this chapter I analyze these continuities and suggest that through the autobiographical act of deposing, Buscetta was able to effectively build a monument to the self in which he reconciles the conflict between the identities of *mafioso* and *pentito*.

## *Chapter 2: Buscetta Implacabile: The Construction of a Robin Hood Criminal in Maxi Trial Printed Press*

On February 10<sup>th</sup>, 1986, the Maxi trial opened, and the courtroom became an international stage upon which a secretive and elusive organization was finally being unraveled in the public eye. As Andrea Meccia notes, the trial was Italy’s first televised national scandal and gathered considerable attention from the public. In an ironic twist this largely televised event came with its caveats; the interrogation of some witnesses, including Buscetta, could not be recorded in full for their delicate nature. While I originally intended to examine both printed media (newspapers and tabloids) and visual media

(recordings of the trial and *telegiornale* reports), the unavailability of visual media pushed this research in a different direction, albeit equally rich in theoretical underpinnings.

Focusing solely on printed press surrounding the Maxi Trial, however, provided ample material for understanding the portrayal of Buscetta and how it relates to mafia narratives in general. I claim that, by largely taking Buscetta's narrative at face value, news sources confirmed the past myth of an innocuous mafia, and portrayed Buscetta as the last great mafioso. By engaging with theories of celebrated criminality, I was lead to see Buscetta as a 'Robin Hood type' criminal, or rather, a heroic criminal in opposition with a corrupt social order. In the case of Buscetta, I analyze how a dichotomous vision of 'old' and 'new' mafias are confirmed at trial. While Buscetta can be read as a continuity of misconceptions of *mafiosita'*, the trial opens up new understandings of the 'modern and bloodthirsty' new mafia as represented by the *cosca* from Corleone. These narratives of a violent mafia are now rampant across media and cause me to return to the Maxi Trial as a point of origin for understanding this cultural shift.

### *Chapter 3: Buscetta in Dialogue: A Harvest of Celebrity Potential for Political Aims*

While in my first two chapters I analyze Buscetta's self-presentation as a continuity with a literary tradition and how it plays out during the trial, I believe that this literary tradition arises elsewhere in narratives of the *pentito* as well. In Chapter 3, I turn my attention to the results of Buscetta in dialogue, or rather, how his personal narrative is potentialized and modified with the presence of a co-author. I analyze three texts that Buscetta produced with journalists after the trial: Enzo Biagi's *Il Boss è solo* (1994), Saverio Lodato's book format interview with Buscetta *La Mafia ha vinto* (1999, republished 2007),

and Pino Arlacchi's *Addio Cosa Nostra: I segreti della mafia nella confessione di Tommaso Buscetta* (1996). I hypothesize that Buscetta's narrative is expanded on in these works, and, through a focus on his personal life Buscetta is treated as celebrity.

The importance of 'Buscetta-as-celebrity' is tied to the larger overall role that celebrities play in popular culture. Buscetta, I claim, met societal expectations as to what a *mafioso* was, and through the authorization by others was further transformed into a larger than life figure. Throughout narratives, in which his private life served as a justification for his 'betrayal', I aim to read the different meanings these authors give to Buscetta through their work. In considering these expanding narratives, I aim to see how the personal becomes political and how Buscetta's narrative is simultaneously commodified for the masses.

#### *Chapter 4: From Document to Drama: Falcone, Buscetta, and the Maxi Remembered*

In Chapter 4, I examine Buscetta's after-life in the media, focusing specifically on different versions of Buscetta that appear in docudramas. Docudramas, as a subgenre, occupy an interesting niche as they borrow both from documentary and melodrama to bring their story to screen. In this chapter, I provide a brief history of mafia films pre-Maxi Trial, and analyze how the time period of the trial comes to screen in different manners. Through my analysis of several docudramas that begin with the death of Giovanni Falcone, I determine that Buscetta becomes a key figure in both remembering and immortalizing Falcone's sacrifices. Frequently posed as an obstacle that allows Falcone's finesse to flourish, Buscetta has come to screen through affective imagery and documentary aesthetics. The issues that arise from this exploration are closely related to themes of the

previous chapters and point to a recurrent idea of constructed narratives and the discrepancies between them. Careful and critical readings of these narratives that use the historical record to support their arguments allow an opportunity to understand how history is *produced* on a most literal level.

## Echoes of a Literary Mafia in The Depositions of Italy's 'First Pentito'

"I've rendered these declarations spontaneously and with full possession of my mental faculties. In this, I have been inspired only by my conscience, not by a desire for revenge or vendetta; the latter, in fact, has never brought back that which has been lost forever. My choice, therefor, ripened over time, is not conditioned by personal resentments and, even less, by the aspiration to be able to make use of the potential resources for the so-called 'pentiti'. In truth, I've realized that the era in which we live is incompatible with the traditional values of *Cosa nostra*, which has transformed into a mob of ferocious assassins inspired exclusively by goals of personal profit."<sup>24</sup>

Tommaso Buscetta, Depositions, 1984

Tommaso Buscetta first broke the unwritten mafia law of omertà in 1984. In betraying this law, that was originally an expression of a socio-economic diffidence to the State, he began collaborating with the entities that were the biggest threat to the system in which he lived and worked within for the entirety of his adult life. Collaborating with the Italian justice system was an outright repudiation of the principle tenet of mafia membership. *Cosa nostra* thrived and persevered in large part due to the aggressive silence that enshrouded it, the ostentatious behavior of suspected *mafiosi* that, upon arrest, slipped through the fingers of the authorities due to their unwillingness to speak, even in their own defense.<sup>25</sup> When Buscetta began his collaboration, he shattered this shield of omertà that had long protected himself and his brothers in crime.

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<sup>24</sup> Unless otherwise noted, all translations in this dissertation are my own, while the original Italian text is provided in footnotes. "Ho reso queste dichiarazioni spontaneamente e nel pieno possesso delle mie facoltà mentali. In ciò sono stato ispirato solo dalla mia coscienza, e non già da desiderio di rivincita o di vendetta; quest'ultima, infatti, non ha mai riportato indietro quello che si è perso per sempre. La mia scelta, quindi, maturata da tempo, non è condizionata da rancori personali e tanto meno dall'aspirazione a poter fruire delle eventuali risorse di favore per i cosiddetti 'pentiti.' In realtà, mi sono reso conto da tempo che l'epoca in cui viviamo è incompatibile coi principi tradizionali di "Cosa Nostra" e che quest'ultima, correlativamente, si è trasformata in una banda di feroci assassini ispirata esclusivamente a fini di tornaconto personale. Tommaso Buscetta, "Dichiarazioni Buscetta Contorno Complete. Vol. 124," CIDMA: 1984, 49-50.

<sup>25</sup> Alexander Stille, *Excellent Cadavers* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1995), 92-94.

This shattering of the metaphorical shield of silence was met with great curiosity and intrigue in the press, the court, and quickly, in the literary field. Buscetta's original depositions were recorded by Giovanni Falcone in 1984, yet shortly after his appearance at the Maxi Trial of 1986, he collaborated on his first literary project: a book length interview, *The Boss is Alone*, with Enzo Biagi, journalist and mafia expert.<sup>26</sup> Again, in 1994, Buscetta gave interviews to Pino Arlacchi which informed the genesis of a pseudo-autobiography entitled *Goodbye, Cosa Nostra*.<sup>27</sup> Finally, near the end of his life, Buscetta met with Salvatore Lodato, another journalist and mafia expert, to narrate his experiences as he reflected on his life in 1999 (*The Mafia Won*). These three texts are products of declarations and conversations in which an interlocutor was always present. The degree of interlocutor input varies by text, allowing for a nuanced understanding of Buscetta's portrayal of self, and also for an understanding of how his narrative was politically appropriated to varying degrees and ends during the 1990s. As I will show, the themes and *topoi* present in those works are imbedded in the deposition, which I believe serves as a bridge between literary visions of the mafia and purportedly historical texts.

As Buscetta's narrative expands, it is worthwhile to reflect on the fact that the idea of cross-contamination (or better yet, a cross-semination of ideas) is introduced by the pentito himself. On the second day of deposing he self-reflexively claims that the word mafia is a literary convention. Reading through the text, I see Buscetta as an integral part of the maintenance of pre-extant literary themes. The deposition I examine in this chapter is

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<sup>26</sup> Marcelle Padovani and Giovanni Falcone, *Cose di cosa nostra*. (Rizzoli: Milan, 1991). Enzo Biagi, *The Boss is Alone*. (Mondadori: Milan, 1993).

<sup>27</sup> I use the designation of pseudo-autobiography as Arlacchi's text reads like a traditional autobiography despite the significant fact that Arlacchi is the author of the first-person life narrative.

steeped in the generic conventions of life narrative and autobiography, and hence lends itself to a fruitful reading through autobiographic theory.<sup>28</sup> As Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson state in their text *Reading Autobiography*,

autobiography is always, multiply, storytelling: memory leaves only a trace of an earlier experience that we adjust into story; experience itself is mediated by the ways we describe and interpret it to others and ourselves; cultural tropes and metaphors which structure autobiographical narrative are themselves fictive [...] <sup>29</sup>

The cultural tropes and metaphors that structure the autobiographies of Buscetta are contestable inasmuch, as Watson and Sidonie underline, they are fictive. The tropes of the honorable mafioso that acts as a protector have already been shown to be a creation themselves, a validating fiction to a historically brutal mafia.<sup>30</sup> In the narration of his own life, Buscetta's recurrence to the tropes of an honorable ancient organization are an essential element to the constitution of his own narrative identity. In this chapter I demonstrate how, through the conventions of autobiography, Buscetta effectively builds a monument of himself in his deposition. In effectively monumentalizing himself, he informs the public's understanding of the mafia and cements the image of a folkloric and innocuous brotherhood that had previously been painted in the public imaginary.

Due to the existence of a pre-established mafia imaginary, the individual that emerges from Buscetta's deposition, whether fictive or truthful, falls in line with narrative creations of mafia prototypes. Buscetta's multiple retellings of his life story foster the creation of a paradoxical new character: that of the mafioso that champions the anti-mafia,

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<sup>28</sup> Personal narrative focuses on the creation of personal identity through the process of narrativization, while autobiography lays claim to truth as the subject of a work is also the author of said work.

<sup>29</sup> Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson, *Reading autobiography: A guide for interpreting life narratives* (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota Press, 2010), 7.

<sup>30</sup> Stille, 15.

or rather, a new character that reconciles his betrayal through claiming to be betrayed. Through the generic conventions of autobiography, Buscetta is able to build his own persona, relying on positive imagery associated with literary bosses. Within these conventions of autobiography, where truth is always subjective, Buscetta creates and maintains his persona as mafioso whilst avoiding the title of 'pentito', a title that represented an aggressive antithesis of mafia tenets. As Alessandra Dino explains in the introduction to the edited volume *Pentiti: I collaboratori di giustizia, le istituzioni, l'opinione pubblica*, the communicative strategy of *Cosa nostra* had always been to reduce written and verbal interactions. The law of silence was "obsessively imposed, emphasized and taught: because it was capable of assuring [...] the stable and lasting hold of the *pactum sceleris* amongst affiliates."<sup>31</sup> Dino also notes that omertà is a rule that guarantees the mafioso's survival; disobeying the rule of omertà is the worst possible crime a mafioso could commit, worse even than traversal killings or double-crossings of former friends: "snitch, traitor, and tragedy-maker is he who speaks, he who violates the accomplice and supportive rule of silence, allowing that which had habitually disappeared in the non-said to emerge."<sup>32</sup>

With proud claims of his mafioso identity, Buscetta provides a stark contrast between his morals and those of the new 'criminals' of a sect that he saw more as a social service than a crime syndicate. By championing his own morals, he provides interpretations of the Corleone clan and establishes himself as an expert and a true mafioso

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<sup>31</sup> "Si comprende, così, perché tra le prescrizioni più tradizionale e rigide del sodalizio mafioso, quella del silenzio sia sempre stata la più ossessivamente imposta, enfatizzata e tutelata: perché in grado di assicurare più di altre, da sola e nel tempo, la stabile e duratura tenuta del *pactum sceleris* tra gli affiliati." Dino, X.

<sup>32</sup> "infame, traditore, tragediatore è colui che parla, colui che viola la regola del silenzio solidale e complice, lasciando emergere quanto abitualmente scompare nel non-detto." Dino, XI.



that, in the service of the underdogs, must work to defeat the new sect that parades in the guise of *Cosa nostra* whilst decimating the morals that Buscetta claims as innate to the mafia of his generation.

Buscetta's rupture of the shield of silence had no successful precedents in the Italian context. While, as Salvatore Lupo states in his *History of the Mafia*, there was a long custom of back-room deals between criminals and justice officials, an open and legislated use of mafia collaborators did not come about in Italy until Buscetta came on the scene. In fact, just over a decade before, a young mafioso by the name of Leonardo Vitale had spontaneously confessed to his mafia crimes and had made accusations against both his sanguine family and mafia family. The results? Vitale was not only incarcerated for his crimes but also declared 'mentally infirm'. The criminals he accused remained free while he was shuffled between jails and criminal asylums for over a decade. The claims he had made were found to be true as many of the claims were repeated in Buscetta's own confessions. Vitale never garnered fame for his untimely courage during his lifetime, when he was eventually released he was silenced in perpetuity by the bullets of *Cosa nostra*.<sup>33</sup> Other *pentiti* that emerged after Buscetta occasionally collaborated on first person life narratives, but no other mafioso has been as prolific as Buscetta in providing material for glorifying false historical accounts of *Cosa nostra* itself.

As James Olney writes in "Metaphors of the Self," autobiography is a way in which an individual can construct a "monument of the self."<sup>34</sup> Olney underlines that autobiography is

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<sup>33</sup> Dino, XII.

<sup>34</sup> James Olney, *Metaphors of self: The meaning of autobiography*, (New Jersey: Princeton University Press: 2017), 35.

representational and does not necessarily need to be truthful. In a similar vein, Paul John Eakin theorizes the constructed nature of autobiography and lays claim that in the act of narrating a life story one is in the process of “making” the self. Eakin describes self-representation as culturally determined and notes that “the forms narrative can take in autobiography are always gleaned from the social environment.”<sup>35</sup> For Eakin, the use of language is essential in one’s conception of their selfhood.

In the case of Buscetta, who passed from the symbolic silence of *omertà* to an ontological battleground where the mafia was being defined and dissected, his repeated returns to a narration of his life story allow him to embody an identity that cannot be separated from the cultural and literary milieu in which his existence was inscribed. Buscetta’s glorification of the old mafia, in fact, is neither novel nor surprising; he is simply the first to express this discourse through autobiographical events which purportedly refer to truthful events. The legitimizing fictions of the mafia are echoed in Buscetta’s confessions and literary themes are presented as true through the powerful lens of personal experience.

Buscetta’s reliance on the autobiographical act to construct his persona is initially visible in his legal depositions, the confessional and legal document produced after his suicide attempt.<sup>36</sup> As Olney conceived of it, the autobiographical act “constitute[s] a bringing to consciousness of the nature of one’s own existence, transforming the mere fact

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<sup>35</sup> Paul John Eakin, *How our lives become stories: Making selves*, (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1999), 23.

<sup>36</sup> The autobiographical act is neither simple nor transparent; according to Smith and Watson, the act is a situated and cultural-historically significant interaction that is engaged in the conveyance of identity; it is rhetorical in the broadest sense. Smith and Watson, 63.

of existence into a realized quality and a possible meaning.”<sup>37</sup> The meaning and image that emerge from Buscetta’s narratives are an extension of literary prototypes of *mafiosi* and mafia themes, and sustain the myth of honor that had long protected the mafia and obscured its true role in undermining legal society.

From the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, in fact, the figure of the honorable mafioso became the dominant representation in popular literary works that focused on the mafia. Alongside the figure of the good mafioso, the polar opposite was to be found in the figure of the *infame*, the lowly collaborator who betrayed the popular law of silence. The defining character traits of the positive mafioso and the conniving collaborator remained relatively uncontested through the first century of the Italian state, and perpetuated a dichotomy in which the mafia (and mafiosi) were seen as following a set of primal laws that were in conflict with the laws of the State. Mafiosi, by extension, were painted as positive resisters who used their occult powers for the greater good. The figure of the *infame* portrayed in literature was, in essence, the opposite: his actions are calculated and rely on the State’s law to undermine the community (which is established, through the law of omertà, to be a public accustomed to, or at least aware of, mafia rule) in a search for his personal well-being. Buscetta carries on this dichotomist tradition, through his depositions and literary collaborations, he comes to embody the literary mafioso *par excellence* and reinforces the negative stereotypes attributed to the *infame*.

The depositions can be seen as a reconciliation between the jarring conceptions of Buscetta-mafioso and Buscetta-pentito. Based on his rhetoric and narrative technique, the

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<sup>37</sup> Olney, 34.

character that emerges of Buscetta, while describing an external and historical realm, is a fiction, a venerable monument of both himself and his mafia. If, as Eakin has noted in *Fictions in Autobiography*, the autobiographical past is shaped both by “memory and imagination to serve the needs of [the] present consciousness,” it is all the more relevant that Buscetta perpetuates the mafia mystique.<sup>38</sup> Through the character he creates of himself he calls on an honorable, albeit fictive, past to establish his dignity, justify his actions, and avoid the title of pentito.

The monument created by Buscetta is steeped in a popular literary tradition that dates back to Italian unification: recycling the thematic inventory of popular narratives about the syndicate, he describes himself as honorable, charitable, charismatic, family-oriented, and describes his initiation into the sect as due to his diffidence to the state authorities. In short, his deposition creates a continuity in the literary tradition through the autobiographical act of confession; the self he creates is fictive but claims to describe a historical fact. As Buscetta constructs his monument to the self, he simultaneously designs a commemorative monument to a mafia that, in his mind, no longer exists. The tropes of the mafia stock character in fictional narratives have been discussed at length elsewhere, but as of yet there has been little attention to the implications of these tropes when they are found in life narratives. I establish this continuity to show how through generic conventions of life narrative, Buscetta monumentalizes himself as the last great Don of a bygone world.

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<sup>38</sup> The “Mafia mystique” a term which I draw from Dwight Smith’s book of the same title (1975) and Rino Coluccello’s 2016 *Challenging the Mafia Mystique: Cosa Nostra from Legitimization to Denunciation*. According to Coluccello’s work, the mafia mystique emerged from the various conceptualizations of the sect in the public imaginary that were ultimately employed to legitimize it and contribute to its success.

Through close textual analysis, I will show how Buscetta's portrayal of himself creates a continuity with fictitious men of honor. In the case of his depositions, the questions asked to Buscetta to prod his confessions are not transcribed; the resulting documents contain Buscetta's words, allegedly verbatim, interspersed with respectful acknowledgements of the judges' presence and intervention. The continuity this legal document creates is troubling and worth exploring due to the fact that, unlike the characters of mafia narratives, Buscetta's experience is rooted in a historical reality that, hence, proposes historical repercussions. With this in mind, throughout the course of the chapter I aim to prove that Buscetta is able to use fictive imagery of the mafia to establish himself as an honorable mafioso that has no choice but to leave the 'new' mafia behind inasmuch it is in direct conflict with the system of honor that he claims *his* mafia upheld. His autobiographical acts memorialize him and his mafia as a dying breed and paradoxically cause him to embody the role of an anti-mafia hero whilst defining himself as a true mafioso.<sup>39</sup>

The salient features of the literary mafia are found from the birth of the nation state and call on several recurring *topoi*: first and foremost, we are presented with the idea of the mafioso endowed with the task of doling out justice. The second *topos* of mafia literature is found in a dichotomist division between the *old* and *new* mafia. In third place we find an almost formulaic meeting between the mafia boss and his antagonist, be it a police captain,

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<sup>39</sup> My usage of anti-mafia in this chapter refers to the anti-mafia movement contemporary to Buscetta that was born with the establishment of an Anti-Mafia Pool of investigators by Rocco Chinnici in 1980. See Schneider & Schneider, Chapter 7, for a compelling analysis of societal changes concerning attitudes toward *Cosa nostra*. Schneider, Jane, and Peter T. Schneider. *Reversible destiny: Mafia, antimafia, and the struggle for Palermo*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003).

judge, or prefect. This meeting sometimes, but not always, allows for a reconciliation of two opposing systems of power, and will come to light especially in my second chapter, which focuses on the aforementioned collaborative biographies of Buscetta.

All three of these *topoi* are drawn into Buscetta's narrative with seeming ease. The codified images of *mafiosi* that exalted them to a positive resistant force were ripe in the mafia genre, and provide a model of mafia behavior that Buscetta embodies in his narrative. The meeting between the mafioso and the judge, instead, plays out with Falcone in a natural extension of Buscetta's delation and is more visible in his subsequent interviews.<sup>40</sup> Buscetta proposes an umpteenth division between old and new mafia and, in doing so, simultaneously ennobles his past and present actions. Through a consideration of popular texts that refer to the secret sect, a fruitful analysis of Buscetta's deposition reveals the echoes of a literary tradition in an autobiographical narrative. This reading of Buscetta's narrative suggests the strength and tenacity of mafia mythology; more importantly, however, it reveals the utility of the narrative over time in protecting the interests of the organized crime syndicate.

#### *The Depositions: 1984*

On July 16, 1984, Buscetta began collaborating with Italian justice to reveal what he had witnessed and participated in during his 34 years as a 'man of honor.'<sup>41</sup> Copies of the

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<sup>40</sup> The relationship between Buscetta and Falcone is not central to Buscetta's deposition, but garners importance in Buscetta's literary collaborations, which will be discussed in Chapter 2. Interestingly, the relationship is symbiotic and is discussed at length in Falcone's own book-length interview *Cose di Cosa nostra*. Giovanni Falcone and Marcelle Padovani, *Cose di cosa nostra* (Milano: BUR, 2012).

<sup>41</sup> Dickie, 29.

hand-transcribed depositions are contained within two massive binders at the CIDMA (Centro Internazionale di Documentazione sulla Mafia e del Movimento Antimafia) in Corleone.<sup>42</sup> Having accessed these binders in their entirety (which each contain a diverse volume) in the summer of 2015, I was able to decipher Giovanni Falcone's handwriting and transcribe large portions of the deposition. The depositions inform my analysis of Buscetta's narrative and serve as a baseline for understanding his subsequent literary collaborations.<sup>43</sup>

Structurally, the account moves in a mostly chronological order that is bookended by overall introductory and conclusory reflections which are discussed further on in this chapter. While there is no evident plot to the confessions, it seems to proceed following Buscetta's rationale. There are scenes that seem lifted straight from literature, like when he describes the initiation process that he went through to become part of Cosa nostra: the 'giuramento' and the list of membership tenets.<sup>44</sup> What prompts Buscetta to make certain statements is unclear, as the minimalistic "A.D.R" (*a domanda risponde*) reveals little about the questions being asked by Falcone and Geraci.

A second volume of depositions, instead, contains the responses to direct accusations made at Buscetta by other mafiosi. In this volume, his responses are explicit

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<sup>42</sup> The original depositions are stored in the Palazzo di Giustizia in Palermo.

<sup>43</sup> The depositions held at the CIDMA are entirely handwritten, in Italian and in cursive. I transcribed and translated the document for the ease of my reader.

<sup>44</sup> Buscetta's description of these rules suggest that he viewed them as so ingrained that he did not bother completing the whole list. Instead he states: "Il giuramento comprendeva la promessa di non rubare, di non invidiare la donna altrui, e così via. Ignoro se tale prassi sia tuttora rispettato per la nomina dei nuovi membri delle famiglie." Buscetta, 23-24.

and to the point, but in them he still uses a rhetoric of personal anecdotes and memories to convey his claims.

I aim to assess how literary models can be detected in the construction of the ‘Buscetta monument’ and present the criminal in a familiar light. Whether or not this intentional or not and whether this had positive repercussions on Buscetta’s own conviction is not for me to say; but the effects of this initial self-rendering are still proliferating across media. The Buscetta monument caught the public imagination as a work of literature might do. An analysis of this document is crucial to understanding Buscetta’s claims about *his* mafia and the role he played with in it: it is the least muddled version of Buscetta’s self-expression, his speech is reported directly and there are no visible interventions from outsiders. The deposition, a legal document, serves as evidence and in its nature is to be truthful and complete. Within this structure of ‘truthful’ confession, however, one can find a wide range of tone. For much of the document, Buscetta describes the links between alleged criminals, the structure of mafia ‘families’ and their interconnected nature, and the causes of the mafia war of the late 1970s/early 1980s.<sup>45</sup> During these portions of the depositions, his words are expository and his tone is impartial, as if he is reporting data. When he speaks of himself and his own decisions, however, the tone changes to one that is deeply personal. In his depositions, he exposes both historical and personal information on a continuum: where memoir ends and history begins is unclear. Considering both the mafia myth and Buscetta’s image as the outcomes of

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<sup>45</sup> The ‘Buscetta Theorem’ affirms Cosa Nostra as “a unitary and secret organization and that the events that signified its life, apparently unconnected, were not independent one from the others but were connected and responding to a single strategy.” Schneider and Schneider, 139.



narrative processes of construction, I believe that the parallels in these constructions is not purely casual but reveals a great deal about the role of literature the conception of selfhood. Furthermore, I believe Buscetta's depositions serve as a reconciliation between his traitorous actions and his mafia mentality.

### *Betraying the Mafia, Buscetta Style*

In his depositions, Buscetta is seemingly aware of the role of literature's role in forming conceptions of the society and; on the second day of his collaboration he states clearly "the word mafia is a literary invention, while true *mafiosi* are simply called *men of honor*."<sup>46</sup> He claims that the term 'mafia' was a designation from the outside, while on the inside it was referred to '*Cosa nostra*', 'Our Thing'. The community, which he describes as homogenous in its goals and rules, built honor into the name as *the* key tenet of mafia belonging, the 'thing' they all embodied. Buscetta's comment contains a falsity, by then literary mafiosi had also been called 'men of honor', but Buscetta neglects this fact and directs the focus to divergent ideas of the nature of the sect from the inside and from within, suggesting that the real truth can only be accessed through his insight.

Honor as part of Buscetta's self-image is central: the image that is presented would ultimately come under microscopic scrutiny and brazen attack throughout the course of his life and even after his death in the year 2000. The first session of Buscetta's confessions set the scene for what is to come; he commands control as declares his intentions in collaborating and transmits story through a presumed morality that had made his choice

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<sup>46</sup>"La parola 'mafia' è una creazione letteraria, mentre i veri mafiosi sono semplicemente chiamati "uomini d'onore." Buscetta, 4.

necessary. His statements reveal an awareness of the potent relationship of cross-contamination between literature and history, but he fails to recognize how he, too, contributes to the ontological confusion of the nature of the organized crime syndicate.

With Alessandra Dino's important work on *pentiti* in mind, I would like to remind the reader of the importance of omertà (as a form of honor) in creating an image of the mafia as an alluring entity, an exclusive club, and an honorable way of being in a corrupt world. In breaking with omertà, Dino describes collaborators as not merely delating but, rather, as breaking from an *image* of the self which they no longer wish to embrace. Alternatively, Buscetta does everything *but* break from the image of his past; he instead mythicizes the past to maintain an image of himself as a positive folkloric figure. In the myth-making process, his repeated returns to an image of a past that, until then, had not been empirically described before creates a truth effect; if Buscetta is the first mafioso to successfully recur to state protection, he also has the advantage that there is no precedence with which to contend. His words become the dictates of understanding what the mafia *really* is, from an *insider's* point of view.

Adding to Dino's analysis, I posit that, because of an iron-clad omertà that caused an absence of an *ontological understanding* of the mafia (rather, that there was still a great deal of confusion around what the mafia actually *was* and even whether it truly existed), Buscetta's narrative creates a continuity with a *literarily* produced image of the secret sect and the idealized figure of the mafioso in his deposition. He is able to maintain an image of himself as unwavering in his morality; far from breaking from his honor as a mafioso, he depicts a mafia that has betrayed him as it has already broken from the image of its own honorable past.

If, as Lupo notes, Buscetta's existence remains inscribed in the 'glossary of so-called mafia values,' his additions to mafia history can hardly be seen as neutral and objective. In the brief preface to the metaphorical book he writes with the justice system, many key themes are introduced, but from a mafioso point-of-view. Reflecting on Buscetta's collaboration as a 'metaphorical book' allows for an emphasis on the parallel processes of deposing and narrative construction. These themes of generosity, justice, and honor are re-elaborated throughout his depositions and, subsequently, through the co-authored narratives of his life experience:

I intend to put forth that I am not a spy in the sense that what I say is not dictated by a desire to obtain favors from the courts. I am not a 'pentito' either, in the sense that my revelations are not motivated by petty calculations of self-interest. I was a mafioso and I made mistakes for which I am ready to pay in full my debt with the justice system, without expecting deals or favors of any kind. Instead, in the interests of society, of my children, and of the youth, I intend to reveal all that I know about the cancer that is the mafia, so the new generations can live in a more upright and humane manner.<sup>47</sup>

Buscetta consciously negates the accusations that will afflict him in the following months and years. In doing so, however, he confirms as real what he had previously stated to be literary invention: of note, however, is that in his definition of the 'mafia' he describes it as directly connected to an idea of degradation. Buscetta's usage of the term mafioso, alternatively, does not maintain the same linguistic distancing from the image of the new 'cancerous' mafia: Buscetta absorbs the term and applies it undiscerningly. By calling on

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<sup>47</sup> "Intendo premettere che non sono uno spione, nel senso che quello che dico non è dettato dal fatto che voglio prefiziarmi i favori della giustizia. E non sono nemmeno un 'pentito', nel senso che le mie rivelazioni non sono motivate da meschini calcoli di interesse. Sono stato un mafioso ed ho commesso degli errori, per i quali sono pronto a pagare integralmente il mio debito con la giustizia, senza pretendere sconti o abbuoni di qualsiasi tipo. Invece, nell'interesse della società e dei miei figli e dei giovani, intendo rivelare tutto quanto è a mia conoscenza su quel cancro che è la mafia, affinché le nuove generazioni possano vivere in modo più degno e più umano." Buscetta, 2.

the idea of a positive past mafia, but then neglecting that differentiation, Buscetta maintains the inherent honor of the mafioso whilst framing his betrayal as a natural extension of his honor in an age where the *real* mafia no longer existed.

### *Onore e omertà: From Sociology to Literature*

In order to rigorously shed light on the literary *topoi* present in Buscetta's deposition, I draw on the works of Pietro Mazzamuto, Antonio Altomonte, and, above all, Massimo Onofri to frame my comparison of his deposition to the content of works that range from a sociological inquiry (that of Sonnino and Franchetti) to apologist Sicilian literature (the works of Rizzotto, Pitrè, Comandè, Di Giovanni).<sup>48</sup> Mazzamuto's and Altomonte's texts are essential in that they synthesize the literary history of mafia themes, but, as Onofri points out, Mazzamuto at times analyzes texts that are only obliquely related to the mafia, while Altomonte analyzes mafia, brigand, and camorra (read: Neapolitan) literature without distinguishing between the three. In Onofri's analysis, he focuses solely on literary endeavors that have a mafioso as their protagonist from unification until the time of his study in 1995.

The strength of Onofri's work is the in depth cultural-historical research that accompany his literary analyses. Departing from the Unification period, Onofri aims to establish the role of the ruling class in the developing what Paolo Pezzino later dubbed "the mafia paradigm" or, rather, the combination of interpretations, common places, and

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<sup>48</sup> Antonio Altomonte, *Mafia, briganti, camorra e letteratura*, (Pan, 1979); Massimo Onofri, *Tutti a cena da Don Mariano. Letteratura e mafia nella Sicilia della nuova Italia* (Milan: Bompiani, 1996); Pietro Mazzamuto, *La mafia nella letteratura* (Andò, 1970).

analyses that the ruling class crystalized in the early Unification period which produced an image of the mafia as 'benign' and the mafioso as 'a man of honor'. This reductive image of the mafioso as a "spirit of independence, courage, bravado, rebellion against tyranny" produced in the aftermath of Unification has been tenaciously disseminated through Italy's literary history.<sup>49</sup>

By framing his decision as due to his own courage and rebellion against tyranny, Buscetta essentially extends the idea of a true mafioso into the present day. So, when he premises that he is *not* a snitch (*spione*), and he is *not* a *pentito*, it could be owed to a perceived difference between his actions and the mold he describes of a *pentito*.<sup>50</sup> The term 'pentito' had already become a loaded term by 1984.<sup>51</sup> The literal meaning of the word suggests a moral change within the *repentant* individual. From the point of view of mafia culture, being a *pentito* is equated to all the negative connotations of being a snitch; in a conflation of the two terms, Buscetta preemptively establishes his rejection of this negative role. The description of a *pentito* that emerges from the deposition equates it to the role of the *infame*, best summed up as one who collaborates due to "petty calculations of self-interest." In fact, Buscetta never addresses the linguistic roots of the term *pentito*, but views the term from the perspective of popular culture.<sup>52</sup> The image of the snitch had

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<sup>49</sup> Onofri, 27.

<sup>50</sup> For a detailed analysis on the term *pentito* and its developments from Italian terrorism to mafia, see Alessandra Dino's 2006 edited volume *Pentiti. I 36 collaboratori di giustizia, le istituzioni, l'opinione pubblica*.

<sup>51</sup> The term has its origin in the 'repented' terrorists that collaborated with the justice system in the 1970s.

<sup>52</sup> Despite Buscetta's desire to not be seen as a *spione/pentito*, the public opinion did not let him off the hook, so to speak. In the late 1980s "Non fare il Buscetta" ("Don't be like Buscetta") became a playground taunt amongst the children of Palermo, revealing a persevering aversion to those who collaborated with the police. Clara Hemphill, "Life and Death in Palermo," *The Threepenny Review*, no. 25 (1986): 13.

been overwhelmingly negative in literary texts with most confidantes meeting a swift and violent end for their unacceptable betrayal of *Cosa nostra*.

With the code of omertà representative of a moral disposition, it follows that the collaborator is met with such loathing. The character of what effectively is a *pentito* is referred to under many names in mafia narratives: *confidante*, *delatore*, *infame*, *cornuto*, and even *sbirro*, a derogatory term usually reserved for police. While I explore the portrayal of the figure in literary texts, it is certainly not a figure limited to solely this aspect of popular culture. Sicilian folk music, for example, melodizes an ingrained disgust towards the figure that collaborates with the oppressive force of national law.<sup>53</sup> As Francesca Viscone writes in her assessment of Sicilian popular music, the mafia law/state law antagonism provides a fertile territory for the creation of character types that include the corrupt policeman doubled by the honorable mafioso, and the vile collaborator as a standalone figure. The breaking of omertà is read as a deep betrayal of the very popular community that *Cosa nostra* claims to protect. The figure is portrayed as opportunistic and individualistic, through a turn to the law he betrays the alleged values of the sect to its most threatening antagonist.

Buscetta's immediate rejection of the term *pentito*, which he affiliates with the negative cultural connotations of the *spione*, allows him to frame his collaboration as an honorable choice. The theme of honor is primary in mafia narratives, and to further the discourse of the noble mafioso, it is essential to establish the honor in a role that had previously, in literature, been relegated to the sordid figure of the *infame*. In the

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<sup>53</sup> Viscone, Francesca, *La globalizzazione delle cattive idee: mafia, musica, mass media*. Vol. 10. (Roma: Rubbettino Editore, 2005), 57.

confessional act of deposing legal information, the personality of the collaborator is poised as central, while his criminal acts are mysteriously, and significantly, relegated to a position of secondary importance. Buscetta protects himself from a loss of honor whilst committing what Rosella Merlino describes in her research on mafia memoirs as “the worst crime a mafioso could commit in mafioso ideology: the defection.”<sup>54</sup> Through foregrounding that the *infami* are the Corleonesi, he avoids being perceived as a *nuddu mischiatu cu nenti* (‘nothing mixed with nil,’ in the translation of John Dickie<sup>55</sup>), a dialect definition that expresses a pure disgust for those that attempt to renounce the ‘honored society.’ Buscetta, instead, describes and maintains the honor implicit to the literary figure of mafioso.

### *Sonnino and Franchetti*

The literary mafioso is a product of a Sicilianist position that aimed to recover Sicilian dignity after the damaging inquiries taking place on the island as early as 1876. These inquests, which began almost immediately after unification found their apex in the parliamentary inquest of 1876, in which Sydney Sonnino and Leopoldo Franchetti, at that time students of Pasquale Villari at the University of Pisa, were sent to investigate the administrative and social conditions of the island.<sup>56</sup> Villari’s teachings, which had condemned the mafia as a problematic aspect of a larger war between classes, resonated in the investigations of the two students.<sup>57</sup> Sonnino focused on the administration of the

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<sup>54</sup> Merlino, Rossella, “Tales of Trauma, Identity, and God: The Memoirs of Mafia Boss Michele Greco and Leonardo Vitale,” *The European Review of Organised Crime* 1, no. 2, (2014): 58.

<sup>55</sup> Dickie, 12.

<sup>56</sup> Dainotto, 30.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 28-29.

island while Franchetti focused on the violence of the mafia as an aspect of Sicilian life, creating a link between Sicilian nature and the existence of the mafia. This conflation of Sicily and mafia was highly contestable, and, according to Onofri, a point of origin for literary endeavors that aim to overturn essentialist visions of Sicilian destitution.

The genesis of the mafia theme in Italian literature is, thus, linked to the debate taking place in the national arena at the dawn of Italian unification: already by 1893 Pitrè's folkloric stories and anecdotes on Sicilian life. The public inquiries into Sicilian society performed by Sonnino and Franchetti depicted Sicily as an unruly territory in which criminals of a 'mysterious and malign power' silently ruled society; they described this power as a 'medieval sentiment' by the name of mafia. The harsh words written against the Sicilians can be summed up in Franchetti's observation that, in the citrus groves that surround Palermo, "all that scent of orange and lemon flowers starts to smell like a corpse."<sup>58</sup> Franchetti's portrayal of Sicilians as a destitute and miserable population living in a picturesque backdrop was quickly met with a defensive backlash from the Sicilian elite. This backlash often took the form of literary works that, in attempts to defend the dignity of the island also tended to defend its inhabitants, even the ne'er-do-wells.

Already by 1893, the Sicilian scholar of folklore Giuseppe Pitrè retorted to the study and contributed in founding the Sicilianist tradition that would become a powerful tool of mafia portrayal. This was a trend that continued throughout the twentieth century according to Onofri, one that met resistance only after the 1960s, with the publication of *Il Giorno della Civetta* (that brought the mafia to the continental stage), and a denunciatory

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<sup>58</sup> Quoted in Schneider, Jane, ed. *Italy's 'southern question': Orientalism in one country*. (Bloomsbury Academic, 1998): 65.



series of works by Giuseppe Fava. Pitrè overturned the observations made by Franchetti and aimed to establish the mafia as a safe-holder of Sicilian honor. He portrayed the mafia as a resistant force to power abuse. Pitrè was a leading authority on all things Sicilian and his published dictionaries of Sicilian dialect and anthologies of Sicilian folk tales glorified the mafia as an essence of Sicilian existence. The following quotation from the second volume of *Usi e Costumi, credenze e pregiudizi del popolo siciliano: raccolti e descritti*, nearly comical in retrospect, sums up his beliefs on the mafia:

The mafia is neither a sect nor an association and has neither rules nor statutes. The mafioso is not a thief or a scoundrel [...] A mafioso is simply a courageous and able man, who does not let a fly sit on his nose; in that sense being mafioso is necessary, or rather, indispensable. The mafia is the consciousness of one's own being, the exaggerated concept of individual strength as the 'one and only means of settling any conflict, any clash of interests or ideas'; which means he is intolerant of the superiority, and worse still, the dominance, of another. The mafioso wants to be respected, and almost always respects. If he is offended, he does not recur to the justice system, or to the law; if he were to do so it would give proof of weakness and would offend omertà, for he retains disgusting and villainous those who, to be right, call on the magistrate.<sup>59</sup>

As the mafia expert Salvatore Lupo has noted, Buscetta is *not* a true pentito because the identity and language he expresses himself in are inscribed within the glossary of so-called mafia values.<sup>60</sup> Buscetta, in short, is caught in a double-bind. Within the parameters of the mafia values that he claims to ascribe to, he must justify his choice to perform an act that

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<sup>59</sup> "La mafia non è setta né associazione, non ha regolamenti né statuti. Il mafioso non è un ladro, non è un malandrino; se nella fortuna toccata alla parola la qualità di mafioso è stata applicata al ladro ed al malandrino [...] Il mafioso è semplicemente un uomo coraggioso e valente, che non porta mosca sul naso; in quel senso l'esser mafioso è necessario, anzi indispensabile. La mafia è la coscienza del proprio essere, l'esagerato concetto della forza individuale, 'unica e sola arbitra di ogni contrasto, di ogni urto di interessi e di idee'; donde la insofferenza della superiorità, o peggio ancora, della prepotenza altrui. Il mafioso vuole essere rispettato e rispetta quasi sempre. Se è offeso, non ricorre alla Giustizia, non si rimette alla Legge; se lo facesse, darebbe prova di debolezza, e offenderebbe l'omertà, che ritiene 'schifusu' o 'nfami, chi per aver ragione si richiama al magistrato.'" Onofri, 42.

<sup>60</sup> Lupo, *Storia della Mafia*, 299.

violates the strictest dictate of mafia membership.<sup>61</sup> This conundrum is best demonstrated in his depositions as he elaborates on what he *is* and why his choice to collaborate had become necessary to uphold his strong sense of morals. He anticipates possible accusations of being self-serving by stating that he is ready to pay the consequences for his actions by surrendering himself to the justice system. He describes his primary motive as a desire to destroy the ‘cancer that is the mafia’ that corresponds to new mafia that no longer respects the ethnic and historical tradition of the mafia he initially joined. In the case of the mafia, the historical tradition at hand was constructed through a potent combination of culturist debates and literary sources that Buscetta echoed in his personal experience.

### *Rizzotto*

The confusion over the nature of the mafia was long-lasting and furthered by literary portrayals of the syndicate. The first work to give name to the phenomenon was the 1863 three-act play, *I mafiusi della Vicaria* by Giuseppe Rizzotto. This play brought the dichotomy between the ‘good mafioso’ and lowly *infame* into relief whilst condemning the criminal system on a surface level: the character of the mafia boss was ‘sweetened’ (according to Mazzamuto) and shown to possess the character qualities that connects him to a larger trend of mafiosi in future literary works.<sup>62</sup>

The title of the play is tied to the plot, as most of the action takes place all within the prison walls of the Vicaria. As Coluccello notes, the direct reference to ‘mafia’ is only found

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<sup>62</sup> For a comprehensive study of depictions of the evolution of mafia in literature, the works of Mazzamuto, Altomonte, Onofri, and Pickering-Iazzi are indispensable.

within the title, while the rest of the work refers to ‘camorristi’ as opposed to ‘mafiosi’; the text also contains a hierarchy of lowlife. Coluccello posits that this is a typical early imprecision in codification, or rather, that the structures found in the camorra of that time were paralleled in the Sicilian crime groups. The play is written in a *verista* style and portray two days in the life of the prison. During this time, an unaffiliated outsider, Don Leonardo, is imprisoned and (after an initial offense to the ruling order of the prison), comes to understand the *modus operandi* of the prison. Don Leonardo receives a series of lessons on life in the Vicaria from the *capo* Zu Iachinu Funciazzu, lessons that the audience benefitted from as well.

Zu Funciazzu is important to the literary history of the mafia, as he, too, follows the stereotypical character traits of the Mafioso or, in the words of Coluccello, “Rizzotto presents a benevolent, folkloristic, positive image of the Mafioso.”<sup>63</sup> He takes part in a variety of mafioso activities: incessant bartering, the exchange of favors, and is, most importantly, the spokesperson for the code of *omertà*. His warnings about traitors are representative of a systemic hatred for those who betray (or rather, *pentito* prototypes), as their betrayal is representative of a rejection of the values of the sect and puts it at risk. Iachinu warns his friend Totò to be careful of Don Leonardo because he speaks too much. Later, in discussing a trial to take place, he claims “those who sing, be damned” and reminds his cellmates that “the caged bird sings out of either anger or irritation.”<sup>64</sup> This anecdote is a reminder that, even in prison, one must keep their adversaries content to avoid an infringement of silence. Because the potential damage caused to the brotherhood

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<sup>63</sup> Coluccello, 45.

<sup>64</sup> “guai a iddi si cantanu”; “l’aceddu chi sia dintra la gaggia, o canta pi stizza o canta pi raggia.”

should a delator speak, the imperative of omertà must be promoted and protected at all costs. In short, Zu Funciazzu is portrayed in a positive light. The parallel I draw with Buscetta is evidenced by the following quote: “he defends the oppressed and those who ask for his help, he respects the dead (even if he has had to kill them), and he initiates newcomers to the rules of the association, defined according to the law of omertà.”<sup>65</sup>

The figure of the informer, Don Nunzio, is quickly killed while the ‘cammoristi’ of the Vicaria prison seem untroubled by the death sentence to be carried out: Nunzio is also the only character that dies in the 3-act play.<sup>66</sup> In the same play, the code of omertà is developed as coinciding with the moral standards of those who live under said code. When an outsider, Don Leonardo, is introduced to the highly mafioso atmosphere of the prison, he is ignorant of the inner-workings of his new environment and offends the low level camorristi. Zu Iachinu, the ‘camorrista’ protagonist of the play, is in the words of Onofri, “even if capable of any crime, he is animated by profound respect of the innocent gentleman.”<sup>67</sup> Zu Iachinu advises the outsider on how to behave and provides him an understanding of the sect that coincides with that accessed by the reader, resulting in a de-codification of omertà and mafia values for the layperson. Those, like Iachinu, who are most faithful to and respectful of the mafia codes inscribed within the text are rewarded by moving upward in the hierarchy, while those who betray it are never forgiven. Onofri,

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<sup>65</sup> Coluccello, 35.

<sup>66</sup> In the early literature of united Italy the present day distinctions between Camorra and Mafia did not exist, instead the terms were treated as synonyms. Paolo Pezzino, “Onorata Società o Industria Della Violenza? Mafia e Mafiosi Tra Realtà Storica e Paradigmi Sicilianisti,” *Studi Storici* 29, no. 2 (1988): 440.

<sup>67</sup> “Pur capace di ogni crimine, egli è animato da profondo rispetto dell’innocente galantuomo.” Onofri, 53.

amongst others, notes that promotion in the underworld follows a “moral growth,” albeit both “distorted and criminal.”<sup>68</sup>

Rizzotto’s literary portrayal of the mafia had great success as it was brought to different stages around the Italian peninsula.<sup>69</sup> The popularity of the play, according to Antonio Altomonte was owed to the realistic proposal of already existing mafia *topoi*: omertà, onore, vendetta. The play also perpetuates the idea of the mafia as an alternative form of power that protects the needs of the popular class more than the new Italian government. This alternate protection scheme was a concept that “would later find its supporters in those determined to legitimate and ennoble the Mafia as a form of honorable rebellion against ‘authorities and the law.’”<sup>70</sup> The portrayal that validates criminal actions is drawn into the historical world as a legitimizing factor in self-representation. Popular literary narrative proves to be a crucial source in the identity construction that Buscetta performs as he relies on an acceptance of his mafia as a positive entity which has been betrayed by the falsity of a new breed of mafiosi as represented by Totò Riina and the Corleonesi.

### *Minor Works*

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<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> The popularity of this work resulted in Rizzotto’s completion of a mafia trilogy. Of the utmost success, however, was *I mafiusi*, which was performed not just in Italy but also in the United States. Rizzotto’s troupe was, in fact, the first Sicilian troupe to perform outside of Sicily. Altomonte, 16.

<sup>70</sup> Altomonte, 30. For an analysis of the cultural role of the mafia in the Unification era, Roberto Dainotto’s chapter “Of Rustic Knights and Godfathers: The Origin of the Mafia” in *The Mafia: A Cultural History* provides an overview of the codification of mafia, the parliamentary investigations of Sonnino and Franchetti, and the complications of the integration of a feudal state into a new born democracy.

Another theatrical work, this time in Sicilian dialect (presumably directed at a Sicilian audience) was brought to the stage shortly after the Rizzotto drama. Alessio Di Giovanni penned *Scunciuru*, his attempt at a Verist play, in 1908. The play deals with themes of love and jealousy and, through the actions of the mythicized “strong and just” boss Francesco Turritu, a resolution is reached. The figure of Turritu, in fact, is dubbed “the perfect vision of the classic mafia,” and is envisioned as capable not only of solving personal issues of family honor, but as significantly being endowed with a noble form of power that has its source somewhere beyond the mortal world.

This mythic rendering of the mafioso as an all-knowing arbiter of justice appears again in Giovanni Comandè's *Don Giovanni Malizia*. This 1930 novel was, according to Onofri, formative for children during the Fascist *ventennio*. Onofri goes into great detail discussing how the novel, which portrays the mafia as a positive force opposed to a corrupt government, was permissible during an era in which the State's hegemony was not to be challenged. Comandè's work bypasses this difficulty through the tried and true method of the historical novel; his story takes place during the Unification period and depicts the mafia as a result of ineffective governing that is eventually defeated through the implementation of a fair government that quashes dissenters. Due to the ultimate vision of a mafia neutralized through good government, like that which the ‘Iron Prefect’ Cesare Mori claimed to carry out in Fascist Sicily, the book was not only widely read but also widely taught in schools during the 1930s and 1940s, the same period in which Buscetta was a school boy.

Whether or not Buscetta was familiar with this text is not crucial to my argument, but it is certainly relevant that this was a text studied during his youth as a depiction of the

mafia. It is representative of a popular portrayal of the mafia during the formative phases of Buscetta's life, and Buscetta's depositions work in continuity with its themes. Likewise, the novel provides a portrait of the mafia boss that repeats the theme of honor and coincides with Buscetta's vision of himself. This boss, Don Giovanni Malizia, is best read through the lens of Pitre'; the explicit descriptions of the boss leave little room for doubt of the strength of positive mafia imagery as the myth of self-justice again comes to light. The portrait of the boss sustains the power of the mafia; describing the boss as omniscient and superior to the police. Malizia is described as a sort of primitive God in the service of the people:

Is he a boss? Who elected him? No one. Everyone. [...] He has no weapons, he doesn't threat, give gifts, or receive them. He has no lists and yet he knows the census, he knows various generations: he knows about the crimes that the police and the confessional were unable to catch, he knows the history of Good and Bad in the Conca D'oro as only God before him did, and as no one after will.

Like in the case of Buscetta's narrative, the mafioso is never described as criminal. The omnipotent and omniscient boss is at the service of society; able to protect the populace in a more effective manner than is possible by the police alone.

### *Pervasive Imagery in Sciascia*

This glorifying trend in mafia literature was a continuation of the Sicilianist tradition of justificatory and apologetic descriptions of the sect; the confusion between the "Sicilian spirit" and the mafia that was originally presented by Pitre' even found its way into the work of Leonardo Sciascia almost a century later. While at first this may seem jarring, as the author and intellectual was renowned for his denunciatory works and views on social justice, it reveals the far reaches of the Sicilianist mentality. The short story *Filologia*

(1973) and the detective novel *The Day of the Owl* (1960) best illustrate the point that Sciascia, too, played a role in the development of the mafia mystique.<sup>71</sup>

In the short story *Filologia*, Sciascia portrays two mafiosi engaging in a discussion about the etymological roots of the word mafia. Through this dialogue, Sciascia comments on the linguistic confusion surrounding the concept, but does little to clarify, despite its alleged origins, what the word mafia came to represent at the time of writing. The effect is that, void of a contextualization, the conversation reads in a parallel manner to apologist presentations of the sect. In fact, the same linguistic confusion that unfurls in the dialogue had been called upon by Pitrè almost a century before as he claimed the word *mafia* was a synonym of *beautiful* (meanwhile, he claimed that *omertà* derived from *omineità*, or, the quality of being *omu*, man).<sup>72</sup> As Onofri has pointed out, this original defense of the mafia from a Sicilianist point of view caused citizens to see the mafia as a positive force connected to Sicilian culture, causing great difficulty in condemning the so-called mafia without condemning the Sicilian populace in its entirety. Sciascia's work (and Buscetta's words) call on this positive image; while Buscetta does not specifically refer to his Sicilian heritage to justify his image, he subscribes to the same school of thought that propelled the mafia mystique. This mystique allowed the mafia to be seen as "a mirror of traditional society," according to the scholar Salvatore Lupo, and helped maintain an ontological confusion about the true nature of the syndicate.

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<sup>71</sup> For a compelling analysis of Sciascia's visions of Sicily and Sicilianeità, see Mark Chu's essay "Sciascia and Sicily, Discourse and Actuality." Chu notes that Sciascia's vision of Sicily and the Mafia, as portrayed in both his essays and in *Il Contesto* is highly complex and at times contradictory: while warning of the dangers of essentialist labels, Sciascia is seen to be participating in (and even authorizing) a mystifying discourse of Sicily as an eternal realm in which folkloric tradition (with the mafia at its center) is alive and well.

<sup>72</sup> Onofri, 44.



With *The Day of the Owl*, instead, another image of a ‘classic’ mafia is offered to the reader. The novel is commonly referred to as Italy’s first mafia novel, despite the rich narrative history that took the sect as its object of inquiry for a century before its publication. The novelty of this work, instead, is that it brought the mafia phenomenon to a massive audience through the populist *giallo* genre. While it is often considered as a denunciation of the mafia, I see this definition as outdated—rather, it was considered as such at the time of its publication due to the doubts and discussions on whether or not the mafia even existed. More than denouncing the mafia, the novel (alongside the less-discussed *Il Contesto*) provided a portrait into how the mafia functioned in a small town in Sicily, how it could be found imbedded in situations that read as common crime on the surface level.

The novel starts with an early morning murder of Salvatore Colasberna. The rest of the novel details the investigative work of Captain Bellodi. During this investigation, another man, Paolo Nicolosi is killed. While at first these two deaths seem unrelated, Bellodi aims to find an invisible network that connects them. Through a series of anonymous tips, and from Calogero di Bella (Paranieddu), Bellodi arrives at the figure of Don Mariano Arena. The most memorable scene of the novel takes place when Bellodi and Mariano are alone together, discussing not only the murders that had taken place, but also their visions of the world.

The presence of Captain Bellodi, a marshal sent to Sicily from ‘the continent’ causes the reader to experience, as a ‘foreigner’ the mystery of the mafia as the crime story unfolds. The striking first scene of the novel showcases a public inscribed in the system of *omertà* as the population of a small Sicilian town scatters and silences at the occurrence of

a *lupara bianca* in broad daylight. As Bellodi comes to unwind the mystery, the description of the “confidente” (Paranieddu) who helps him reach the mafia boss Don Mariano Arena showcases yet again how the figure is at odds with positive views of the mafia. The ‘confidente’, while originally being a spy used by the criminal organization, was killed off as soon as he began to share his information with the police. He is depicted as self-serving, manipulative, and double-crossing; in other words, the rendering of the ‘confidente’ envisions him as a polar opposite to Don Arena, the boss that controls the territory.

Buscetta creates a portrait of himself that falls in line with the vision of Don Arena; he is not to be read as self-serving, but as in service of others. To this point, he describes his altruism in a variety of manners in his depositions. Most frequently, the topic of his biological family is a useful strategy to portray himself as a *pater familias* concerned solely with the wellbeing of his family. He describes many of his actions as being motivated by the quest for a simple and peaceful life for his loved ones: his claim is unsurprising and is found in a wide range of mafia memoirs. This recurrence to a cultural and literary precedence of the peacemaking boss is evidenced as Don Arena describes the prosperous life he has been able to provide for his daughter, who resides at a finishing school in France.

Furthering this parallel between Buscetta and Don Arena, the relationship between Buscetta and Falcone is reminiscent of the power dynamic found portrayed in the literary world. Sciascia was both simultaneously cognizant and prophetic in writing the literary relationship between Capitan Bellodi and Don Arena; his Bellodi proposes techniques that the anti-mafia pool would adopt in the 1970s at the behest of Falcone.<sup>73</sup> Bellodi explores

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<sup>73</sup> Most significantly, Sciascia’s detective followed a paper trail to trace bank deposits and withdrawals in a clever circumvention of the ironclad omertà that plagued the society of the novel. This technique would later

the mafia phenomenon in his infamous dialogues with Don Mariano (in which Don Mariano divides humanity into five categories) as Falcone later does with Buscetta. In both of these relationships, expectations and realities of the mafia reach their zenith as the literary discourse on the mafia pervade both Don Arena and Buscetta's mentalities.

The mafioso of the novel, Don Arena, calls on 'the old Sicilianist tradition', or rather, what Rino Coluccello describes as:

the imposture of a good mafioso, which is necessary in a violent and oppressed land like Sicily. He expresses a great respect for Captain Bellodi. These two men represent opposing powers; however, Don Mariano's power is more widespread than Bellodi's. The mafia is more powerful than the state, which allows the boss to express his admiration for his enemy.<sup>74</sup>

Buscetta, like Don Arena, is aware that the power of the mafia is greater than that of the state, but through his almost paternal teachings to Falcone he abandons the criminal/legal dichotomy and pools them together in the category of 'men', distancing himself from the lowly 'quaquaraquà' and establishing a form of dignity that likens him to the judge in front of him. Like in the case of Don Arena and Captain Bellodi, Buscetta engages with the judge only after his arrest. Buscetta vows to use his knowledge to help the investigator Falcone, creating an instant bond of complicity between the two. The fictive Captain Bellodi and Falcone share an approach to recognizing the humanity in the 'criminals' before them, they are both aware of the necessity of recognizing that the mafia is a human phenomenon that must not be transformed into a monster.

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become instrumental in the anti-mafia pool's approach, inspiring comparisons between Captain Bellodi and Carlo Alberto Dalla Chiesa and, later, judge Falcone. Coluccello, 212.

<sup>74</sup> Coluccello, 207.

In Buscetta's depositions, many of the same literarily produced themes return to the foreground. In countless instances, Buscetta's rhetorical styling reveals his sense of his own honor. He claims that the bond shared by mafiosi "is more solid and impenetrable than if it were written in any document," and is aware of the outcomes of breaking this bond.<sup>75</sup> In one instance he responds to the accusations of another mafioso that he had been the cause of the murder of Bernardo Diana, illustrating how he exploits his mafia mentality at the service of his innocence: "Beyond that, during my detention at the Ucciardone, from 1972 onward, I was always treated with esteem, affection and deference; if I had been considered a traitor, the behavior towards me would have been radically different."<sup>76</sup> This is a recurring trend in the deposition: proclaiming innocence by providing subjective proof, often directly linked to the mafia mentality of the idea of memory. Buscetta's story, that comes to light through his confession, is a full-on character construction. If confession, according to LeJeune is a central attribute of autobiography, it seems that this particular confession is used much like an autobiography: through narrative choices, the author builds his persona.

In creating this persona, Buscetta's claims to his mafioso honor take place in many forms. Either through a recurrence to speaking of himself as a family man (ex: an example in which Buscetta used his 'ascendenza' to hinder a mafioso that was encroaching on Buscetta's son-in-law's construction business), insisting on responsibility (ex: "in my day, pretending to be insane was a reason for demerit, because it showed that one did not know

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<sup>75</sup> "È ancora più saldo e impenetrabile che se fosse scritto in qualsiasi documento." Buscetta, 107.

<sup>76</sup> "Inoltre, durante la mia detenzione all'Ucciardone, dal 1972 in poi, sono stato sempre trattato dai detenuti con stima, affetto e deferenza; se fossi stato considerato un traditore, il comportamento nei miei confronti sarebbe stato radicalmente diverso." Buscetta, 27.

how to assume responsibilities for their own actions”<sup>77</sup>), and describing himself as aiming to protect the weak (ex: in 1983, he was visited by Gaetano Badalamenti in Brazil and told that “[his] wisdom was useless and the ferocious bloodbath of the enemies continued to kill innocent victims”).<sup>78</sup> His sense of honor and self-respect, alongside the love for his family are portrayed as the driving forces behind his role (or, in his words, lack there-of) in the Mafia war taking place in the 1980s, which he describes as “una guerra assurda” (an absurd war).

Buscetta repeatedly refers to the idea that he was wrongly accused of being involved in drug-trafficking. This is essential to his deposition. As I will show in the next section, much of his case was built through a claim that he belonged to a different and more genuine mafia. As narcotrafficking is a main business that Buscetta claims transformed the mafia into an unrecognizable form, he must vehemently claim he was not a part of it for his story to hold up. These claims come through above all in the second volume of the depositions, where he responds to direct accusations by other mafiosi. His claims are both evidence-based (saying that he had already been absolved of trafficking crimes in previous cases, so he would not be punished again for talking about them) as well as justified by his own honor: “The truth is that I am completely innocent and so, for respect for myself, I cannot confess to being responsible for crimes that I did not commit.”<sup>79</sup> Buscetta’s self-

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<sup>77</sup> “ai miei tempi, la simulazione della pazzia [...] era titolo di demerito poiché significava non sapere assumere responsabilità delle proprie azioni.” Buscetta, 121.

<sup>78</sup> “la [sua] sagesza non era servita a nulla e che la ferocia sanguinaria degli avversari continuava a uccidere vittime innocenti.” Buscetta, 72.

<sup>79</sup> “Ma la verità è che io sono completamente innocente per cui, per rispetto verso me stesso, non posso confessarmi autore di reati che non ho commesso.” Buscetta, 29-30.

rendering creates an overall idea of him as an honorable individual that had long been at odds with his 'colleagues', which he demonstrates through a series of past conflicts. Relying on specific memories to bolster his story, he reflects on his role in an autobiographical manner, and portrays himself as an innocent, a victim of gossip, and a true *man of honor*.

### *Old and New: A Temporal Division of Honor*

As Buscetta's declarations continue, he repeatedly expresses disdain for the 'new' mafia represented by the family of 'criminals' from Corleone. He does not merely differentiate the past mafia from the present, but he gives it a physical representation in the clan of the Corleonesi which he refers to as "a band of criminals." Never, however, does he doubt the integrity of *his* mafia, which is composed of 'men of honor' like himself. Reflecting on Onofri's claim of the literary topos of a false dichotomy between two temporally exclusive brotherhoods that are polar opposites on a moral compass, Buscetta's personal narrative confirms the notoriously victorious outcomes of calling on tradition. According to Lupo, however, this was a "flimsy claim" because "within the mafia betrayal and brutality have been compatible with honour since the beginning."<sup>80</sup>

### *I Beati Paoli*

Buscetta has elsewhere legitimized his life story based on literary themes, in his interview with Enzo Biagi (which I will discuss in depth in Chapter 2) Buscetta claims that "the mafia was not born now: it comes from the past. First there were the Blessed Paolists

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<sup>80</sup> Dickie, 29.

who fought with the poor against the rich, then the *carbonari*: we agree to the same oath, the same duties.”<sup>81</sup> While the claim is made explicitly in the interview, in his deposition he already begins to portray himself like a saintly and Blessed Paolist, who was betrayed by an association in which he deeply believed. Buscetta relies on the 1909-1910 periodical narratives of Luigi Natoli, whose narratives hark back to 18<sup>th</sup> century Sicily and the alleged secret society of the *Beati Paoli*, or *Blessed Paolists*, a society with which *Cosa nostra* shares not only religious initiation rites, but also the Robin-Hoodesque portrayals of its members.<sup>82</sup>

In fact, Natoli’s description of the *Blessed Paolists* found resonance throughout the century in *Cosa nostra*; the pentito Salvatore Contorno was even dubbed Coriolano della Floresta by his mafia brothers, a name that came directly from the pages of the *Blessed Paolists*.<sup>83</sup> The idea of the mafia as a sect concerned with social justice was solidified in the imaginary in part through this text; the idea of the justice-maker through vendetta was repeated and given a history that stretched back to the seventeenth century. As the title of the work suggests, the ‘Blessed Paolists’ had a form of power that came from beyond the limits of the natural earth. The rite of initiation performed by the Blessed Paolists, complete with finger pricking, burning saints and brotherly oaths coincided with that reported by Buscetta. This ritual, according to Buscetta, remained unchanged until the times of the Corleonesi’s bid for power. Speaking of his own initiation, Buscetta describes the ceremony

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<sup>81</sup> “La mafia non è nata adesso: viene dal passato. Prima c’erano i Beati Paoli che lottavano coi poveri contro i ricchi, poi i carbonari: abbiamo lo stesso giuramento, gli stessi doveri.” Biagi, 200.

<sup>82</sup> Natoli wrote under the pen name of William Gault, his stories were published in 239 episodes between 1909 and 1910 in the *Giornale della Sicilia*. Altomonte, 28.

<sup>83</sup> Stille, 164.

as a formal introduction to the moral mandates of the sect. He embraces a temporal distance between his experience and the contemporary mafia and again describes the morality of his mafia. He states:

*In my day, to become a man of honor, one needed to take an oath in front of five or six members of the family. The oath was comprised of promises not to steal, not to long for another man's woman, and so on. I'm unaware if this practice of nominating new members of the family is still respected. If the mafioso is arrested, this does not cause him to be expelled or suspended from belonging to his family. Even inside jail his qualities of a man of honor count [...] Once the oath of a man of honor is made, he remains that for his whole life. It is not possible in any manner to spontaneously to cease in this qualification.<sup>84</sup>*

Buscetta's description of the oath indicates that honor and loyalty are an essential element of the code that binds him, like other men of honor, for life. By reiterating the strength of this bond, he again gives the impression that his decision to collaborate stems from the betrayal of other men of honor, not from himself.

### *The Godfather*

Perhaps, however, this image of the benign boss is best seen in Mario Puzo's renowned novel *The Godfather* (1969).<sup>85</sup> While the novel described the inner-workings of a fictional New Jersey crime family, the image it proposed of Don Corleone was one that

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<sup>84</sup> "Ai miei tempi per divenire uomo d'onore occorreva prestare giuramento di fronte a cinque o sei membri della famiglia. Il giuramento comprendeva la promessa di non rubare, di non invidiare la donna altrui, e così via. Ignoro se tale prassi sia tuttora rispettato per la nomina dei nuovi membri delle famiglie. Se il mafioso viene arrestato, tutto ciò non provoca la espulsione o la sospensione della tua appartenenza alla famiglia. Anche all'interno del carcere pesano le sue qualità di uomo d'onore [...] Una volta prestato il giuramento di uomo d'onore, si rimane tali per tutta la vita. Non è possibile in nessun modo di cessare spontaneamente da tale qualifica." Buscetta, 22-23. My emphasis.

<sup>85</sup> Bonanno's 1983 autobiography *A Man of Honor* anticipates many of the neutralization techniques that Buscetta uses in his own narratives. The persistence of the mafia myth is essential in these criminals' justifications and confessions. It was perpetuated in a cross-continental context and the influence of literature on shaping this cultural credence is not to be underestimated in either the American or Italian context.



paralleled the imagery produced in the Italian popular mafia narratives, suggesting an exportation of the mafia myth. The stoic and generous Don Corleone acts out of logic and contemplation, speaks with purpose, and is always attentive to the appearance his family presents, while the reality behind the façade may vary greatly. He, like Buscetta, held a legitimate job and used his business to cover the activities that, while honorable to him, were, in fact, illegal. The younger generation that includes Don Corleone's own sons, are depicted as power and money hungry, and are a source of worry for the Don as he nears his death.

In many respects, Buscetta mirrors the image of the heroic mafioso proposed by Puzo. He claims that his dedication to the legal economy (he was a mirror maker by trade) allowed him semi-liberty from his sentence in a Turin jail during the mafia war of the 1970s.<sup>86</sup> Initially, he says, he respected this privilege and returned nightly to jail after working the days in a glass factory. After proving that he was trustworthy, however, he neglected to return one evening and made his way back to Palermo. In his description of why he evaded his sentence, he describes a corrupt police force as being the cause as they had created “unbreathable air” through their continuous check-ins and threats.<sup>87</sup>

Buscetta describes that, upon his arrival, tensions were already growing in the Sicilian capital as the clan from Corleone, led by Luciano Leggio, Bernardo Provenzano, and Salvatore (Totò) Riina had seized the power of the *Cosa nostra* commission and created an ‘atmosphere of distrust’ as many mobsters redirected their loyalties to the new leaders.<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> Buscetta, 47.

<sup>87</sup> Buscetta, 45.

<sup>88</sup> Gambetta, 131.

Buscetta describes himself as an important advisor, a Don Corleone of sorts, to whom his partners looked for advice in an era of uncertainty. Notwithstanding the requests from the losing factions led by Stefano Bontate, Gaetano Badalamenti, and Giuseppe (Pippo) Calò, he claims he does not want to involve himself in either the battle for Palermo or the profits to be made in Palermo, and expresses his “wish to abandon everything and return to Brazil.”<sup>89</sup> Much like Don Vito Corleone after he is riddled with Christmas Eve bullets, Buscetta claims to prefer a quiet life in which he could focus on the maintenance of his biological family and his land. In both instances, mafiosi that portray themselves as traditional *pater familias* search for their roots in societies in which they claim to feel alienated from, portraying themselves as anachronistic and morally distanced from a degraded reality.

Buscetta remains in Brazil from 1981-1984 and he narrates that, even once he was removed from the situation in Palermo, he was called upon time and again “as to direct, in light of [his] influence, a revenge plan against the Corleonesi.” Buscetta describes a secret trip to Brazil undertaken by Gaetano Badalamenti in which Badalamenti invites him to return to Palermo to help him in the mafia war. Buscetta explains:

I responded to the proposal of [Badalamenti] that it was simply insane to think that I, by virtue of my influence, could in some manner overturn an irreparably compromised situation. I suggested, instead, that Badalamenti do as I did; I was attempting to introduce myself into the Brazilian lumber industry and buy a *fazenda* in which he could, together with his family, find asylum.<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> “Quando sono andato a trovare, a Roma, Pippo Calò, dopo di essermi allontanato da Torino, quest’ultimo al quale spiegai la mia volontà di abbandonare tutto e di tornare in Brasile, insistette moltissimo perché io riscossemi per il presente che c’era la possibilità di guadagnare moltissimo a Palermo avendo in corso l’operazione di risanamento dei quartieri.” Buscetta, 38-39.

<sup>90</sup> “Io replicai alla proposta del mio interlocutore che era semplicemente pazzesco il pensare che io, solo in virtù del mio ascendente, potessi in qualche modo capovolgere una situazione irrimediabilmente compromessa. Suggerii, invece, al Badalamenti di fare come me che stavo tentando di introdurmi in Brasile

This statement serves several purposes; it foreshadows Buscetta's choice to collaborate by revealing that, even two years before he began to speak he was already intolerant of the transfer of power taking place in Palermo. In addition, he never directly acknowledges what his 'influence' over a situation really means-- whether this influence will be exercised verbally or through physical violence is never explained. Buscetta claims to wish to remain extraneous to an uncongenial situation; explains his position and stresses that he was already attempting to build a better life for himself and his family through his participation in the legal economy. He puts his altruism on display by claiming to offer refuge to Badalamenti.

Buscetta and Badalamenti, according to Buscetta, met several times during 1982 and 1983. After the disappearance of Buscetta's children, Antonio and Benedetto, Badalamenti again implores him to return to Palermo. Buscetta's reaction again is motivated by a deep concern for his family's well-being. He states:

This time, as well, I refused and made it known, as my two children were now dead, that I hoped with my inertia that the Corleonesi would quit harassing me and, above all, leave my surviving children, amongst which two from my first wife, in peace.<sup>91</sup>

He speaks of these events as having a profound effect in one of few instances in which his emotions become part of his otherwise sober deposition. Amidst the indirect discourse in which he refers to his meetings with Badalamenti, he describes that he had been thrown

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nel commercio del legname, e di acquistare una fazenda, nella quale avrebbe potuto trovare asilo insieme coi suoi famigliari." Buscetta, 38-39.

<sup>91</sup> "Anche stavolta mi rifiutai, facendo presente che, se, come non avevo dubbi, i miei due figli erano ormai finiti, io speravo che, con la mia inerzia, i Corleonesi avrebbero desistito dal molestarmi e, soprattutto, avrebbero finito col lasciare in pace gli altri miei miei figli superstiti, di cui due della prima moglie." Buscetta, 73.

into a state of 'pain and despair.' Each time Badalamenti visits him, Buscetta claims to reject and reproach Badalamenti for his implorations. Buscetta sees Badalamenti as an indirect cause of the systemic elimination of his relatives and begs him to stay away.

Buscetta describes his deep loyalty to his biological family- a theme that is also present in Puzo's work; like with Don Corleone, the family is the ultimate motivator for participating in the secret brotherhood. For Buscetta, the family also becomes the main reason for leaving the mafia: if the syndicate no longer has the family as a key concern, and goes as far to decimate his offspring, it is evident that the modern mafia has betrayed the alleged system of honor. In Puzo's novel, and in the subsequent films that represent them, a transition between types of mafias are directly tied to the generational differences between Don Corleone and his overzealous son, Michael. Don Corleone, disillusioned by the violence recurred to by his own son, cannot stop the unraveling; Buscetta, instead, reconciles with his past by positioning himself as parallel to Don Corleone. He, too, views a historical change but negotiates it through monumentalizing himself as an anachronist visionary that has lived through these changes.<sup>92</sup> The new/old mafia dichotomy comes to light in Buscetta's depositions in his desire for peace for his family.

This illustration of this divide comes to a peak in the story of his arrest in Brazil in 1971; at this juncture he was still active in the mafia (in fact he insists that it was only his

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<sup>92</sup> In Roberto Dainotto's analysis of *The Godfather* franchise, he describes the usage of Mascagni's *Cavalleria Rusticana* (in turn based on an eponymous short story by Giovanni Verga) in Coppola's 1973 film as being crucial to setting the stage for understanding the Corleone family story. Dainotto reveals parallels between Puzo's novel, the film, and Verga's story, claiming that the drama, ethnic 'italianicity', theatricality, and Sicilian setting that made it popular to Italian audiences were deeply entwined with an American nostalgia for a simpler past.

reputation as a dangerous mafioso that caused him to be arrested<sup>93</sup>) and had no intentions of betraying his associates. He speaks of the torture he was subjected to and uses his then silence to corroborate that his present resolve to collaborate is based on necessity rather than fear.

I was tortured at length, so that I would reveal my relations with the Sicilian mafia, with electric shocks to my testicles, anus, teeth and ears. The nails of my big toes were ripped off; I still show signs of this torture because my toenails now grow very slowly and irregularly. In addition, I was hooded and tied to a pole for hours under the searing sun. In spite of all of this, I did not speak even one word on *Cosa nostra* and I would like to underline this because my current processual behavior is not dictated by either fear for my integrity or fear for my self, but rather it is dictated by the awareness that it is necessary to destroy this band of criminals that has misinterpreted and sullied the principles of *Cosa nostra*. At the end of this torture, they realized that they wouldn't have extracted any [information] from me and they expelled me from Brazil, forcing me to board an airplane to Italy, where I was arrested.<sup>94</sup>

At this point, in 1971, Buscetta claims to still believe in the values that caused him to become part of *Cosa nostra*. Additionally, he poses himself as strong and just, while the police are painted as corrupt. His criminal actions, like in the case of his prison evasion in Turin, come to represent resistance against misused power; doubly, they function to impress upon the listener his strength and dedication used in the defense of justice.

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<sup>93</sup> The official version of Buscetta's arrest finds him with a quantity of heroin with a market value of the equivalent of 400 million euros. Carlo Ruta, *Narcoeconomy: Business e mafie che non conoscono crisi* (Roma: LIT Edizioni, 2011), 76.

<sup>94</sup> "Fui a lungo torturato perché rivelassi i miei rapporti con la mafia siciliana, mediante scosse elettriche ai testicoli, all'ano, ai denti e alle orecchie e mi furono strappate le unghie degli alluci; di tali torture conservo tuttora le tracce poiché le unghie adesso crescono molto stentatamente e in maniera irregolare. Inoltre, ero tenuto sempre incappucciato ed appeso ad un palo per ore sotto il sole cocente. Ciononostante, non ho detto nemmeno una parola su Cosa Nostra e vorrei sottolineare ciò perché il mio attuale comportamento processuale non è dettato né da timore per la mia incolumità né da tornaconto personale, bensì dalla consapevolezza che è necessario distruggere questa banda di criminali che hanno travisato ed infangato i principi di Cosa Nostra. Alla fine di queste torture, si sono resi conto che non avrebbero ricavato nulla da me e mi hanno espulso dal Brasile, facendomi imbarcare su un aereo che mi ha portato in Italia, dove sono stato arrestato." Buscetta, 11.

Positioning himself as morally upstanding, he gives historical form to the pre-existent idea of mafiosita' as a form of resistance to bad governing.

At the closing of his deposition, Buscetta's narrative again reveals the old/new dialectic of the 'band of criminals' that had superseded the honorable association is described as the direct cause of his collaboration with the justice system. The end of his deposition creates a significant bookend with its beginning. He states: "Before concluding this long interrogation of mine, I would like to formulate some considerations that originate from my own experience."<sup>95</sup> In the following paragraph he transforms into an omniscient figure, putting forth different possibilities while relying on pure postulation. By adding these final considerations, he shifts the attention from himself and reaffirms that his intentions are pure and positive while the Corleonese clan is the enemy that should be feared.

While Buscetta had previously stated that "in my atmosphere, one does not ever ask questions, but the interlocutor, when he retains it necessary, makes you understand, with a phrase, a tip of the head and even with a smile, where the orders come from,"<sup>96</sup> he nevertheless begins a series of considerations based on presentiments rather than knowledge. He posits that the new clan headed by Riina and Provenzano seems to have more than a 'simple alliance' with other mafiosi like Pino Greco, Francesco Madonia and Nene' Geraci; Buscetta wonders whether or not they have formed a "distinct family outside

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<sup>95</sup> "Prima di concludere questa mia lunga interrogazione, vorrei formulare alcune considerazioni, che provengono dalla mia esperienza." Buscetta, 49.

<sup>96</sup> "Nel mio ambiente non si fanno mai domande, ma l'interlocutore, quando lo ritiene, ti fa' capire, con una frase, con un chino del capo ed anche con un sorriso, da dove proviene la mano insinuata a determinate vicende" Buscetta, 116.

of and against the rules of Cosa nostra.”<sup>97</sup> From what he knows, the actions taken by these ferocious criminals are difficult to explain should they not be the fruit of a new and secretive family. He reiterates that this is only a suspicion, but that the commission had been informed of crimes taking place only after their occurrence leads him to believe the Corleonesi may have gone rogue.<sup>98</sup>

In the second part of his closing statement, Buscetta makes an emotional proclamation that merits transcription in its entirety:

I’ve rendered these declarations spontaneously and with full possession of my mental faculties. In this, I have been inspired only by my conscience, not by a desire for revenge or vendetta; the latter, in fact, has never brought back that which has been lost forever. My choice, therefore, ripened over time, is not conditioned by personal resentments and, even less, by the aspiration to be able to make use of the potential resources for the so-called “pentiti”. In truth, I’ve realized that the era in which we live is incompatible with the traditional values of *Cosa nostra*, which has transformed into a mob of ferocious assassins inspired exclusively by goals of personal profit.<sup>99</sup>

Buscetta describes his mental well-being and his purity in his collaboration.<sup>100</sup> He speaks emotionally yet logically, and foresees objections that he only collaborates for personal

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<sup>97</sup> “[...] una distinta ‘famiglia’ al di fuori e contro le regole di Cosa Nostra.” Buscetta 48.

<sup>98</sup> According to Buscetta’s declarations, and those of other collaborators, the boss of a territory must be informed of crimes being committed in his territory. If a boss orders a crime it must be carried out; for more serious crimes (for example, the killing of a policeman, judge, or politician) the crime must be approved by the commission before it is carried out.

<sup>99</sup> “Ho reso queste dichiarazioni spontaneamente e nel pieno possesso delle mie facoltà mentali. In ciò sono stato ispirato solo dalla mia coscienza, e non già da desiderio di rivincita o di vendetta; quest’ultima, infatti, non ha mai riportato indietro quello che si è perso per sempre. La mia scelta, quindi, maturata da tempo, non è condizionata da rancori personali e tanto meno dall’aspirazione a poter fruire delle eventuali risorse di favore per i cosiddetti ‘pentiti.’ In realtà, mi sono reso conto da tempo che l’epoca in cui viviamo è incompatibile coi principi tradizionali di ‘Cosa Nostra’ e che quest’ultima, correlativamente, si è trasformata in una banda di feroci assassini ispirata esclusivamente a fini di tornaconto personale.” Buscetta, 49-50.

<sup>100</sup> In 1973 the spontaneous confessions of Leonardo Vitale secured him not only a prison sentence, but an internment in an insane asylum. He was eventually released and killed by the mafia in 1984. Buscetta’s reference to his sanity can be read as a preemptive defense to possible future allegations of instability. Stille, 92.

gain. He creates a clear dichotomy: he is the old school mafioso who acts from principle and honor while *they* are greedy and ferocious criminals that, through their violence, have irrevocably destroyed the brotherhood. His opening claims of not being a 'pentito' are repeated; the monument that emerges of Buscetta is, thus, that he is still to be viewed as mafioso, in the literary conception of the word.

Immediately after this claim, he states that to be true to the values he claims, he has no choice but to collaborate.

I do not fear death, nor do I live with the terror of being killed by my enemies. When my turn will come, I will face death serenely and without fear. I chose this path in a definitive and irreversible manner and I will fight with all my strength so that *Cosa nostra* will be destroyed. I know the humiliations and suspicions that I will be forced to undergo, and how many people who are misinformed or unbelieving will ironize my life choice; but even if I will be derided or, worse, called a liar, I will not recede even a millimeter and I will try to induce all those who are still undecided to follow my example to put a final end to a criminal organization that has caused only grief and despair in many families and has not brought forth any contribution to the development of society.<sup>101</sup>

This final statement displays Buscetta as recognizant of the legitimacy of the state and, furthermore, promotes the advancement of the anti-mafia movement. The division between past and present mafias has fallen away as he hopes for *Cosa nostra's* total destruction: all that remains is the idea of a purely evil mafia to which Buscetta no longer swears allegiance. It is certainly a unique moment in Buscetta's depositions, as he fully

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<sup>101</sup> "Non temo la morte, né vivo col terrore di essere ucciso dai miei nemici; quando verrà il mio turno, affronterò la morte serenamente e senza paura. Ho scelto questa strada in via definitiva ed irreversibile e lotterò con tutte le mie forze affinché Cosa Nostra venga distrutta. So bene quali umiliazioni e quali sospetti nel mio conto sarò costretto a subire e quanta gente male informata o in mala fede ironizzerà su questa mia scelta di vita; ma anche se sarò deriso o, peggio, chiamato bugiardo, non indietreggerò nemmeno di un millimetro e cercherò di indurre tutti quelli che ancora sono indecisi a seguire il mio esempio per finirla una volta per tutte con un'organizzazione criminale che ha arrecato solo lutti e disperazione in tante famiglie e che non ha apportato nessun contributo allo sviluppo della società." Buscetta, 50.



surrenders himself to the will of the state and foreshadows the role of the anti-mafia hero that he will further develop in his interviews. He continues to create his persona through the absorption of a dominant discourse which is traceable to the beginning of Italy as a unified state. His invitation to other mafiosi to follow in his footsteps suggest a knowledge of the importance of his role, and of collaborators in general. This call to justice is not intended to have mafiosi 'repent' but to have the 'true' mafiosi, like himself, realize the degradation of the sect. He, like the literary criminals before him, has reconciled with the state and recognized the legitimacy of its power.

#### *A Meeting of the Mafia and the State*

In the act of reconciling with the state, the relationship between Buscetta and Falcone is representative of the third literary topos, that of the meeting between a mafioso and his antagonist. The meeting allows for a dialogue in which the mafioso becomes both narrator and object of inquiry. In the case of Buscetta and Falcone, this results in a reconciliation between two forms of power. A rapport of respect between Buscetta and Falcone is made clear in the collaborator's interjections in which he corrects or adds details to previous statements.<sup>102</sup> He speaks eloquently and openly, reminding his interlocutors that the memory can be fickle and comments on the nature of his depositions stating "I ask that the investigating magistrate to excuse me if my story is not organic, given the

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<sup>102</sup> The respect between Falcone and Buscetta is mutual, in Buscetta's own narratives he always speaks positively of Falcone. This relationship is elaborated on in the 1991 publication *Cose di Cosa nostra*, a previously cited compilation of interviews between Giovanni Falcone and the French journalist Marcelle Padovani.

enormous heap of facts and events that, fortunately, come back to my memory.”<sup>103</sup>

Buscetta underlines that the narration of events is spontaneous and hence will not always be polished in their presentation. This rhetorical device, characteristic of autobiography, allows him to continuously edit and augment his narrative and underline the high caliber of his persona. In addition, it creates a layer of protection that allows him to recur to the tricks of the memory if aspects of his deposition are found to be untruthful. This technique renders the deposition more conversation-like in tone and foreshadows some of the issues of truthfulness in life-writing, namely that memory is revisionist and truth is subjective rather than objective in nature.

This third literary *topos* is extended through a series of Buscetta-condoned biographies in which he was afforded the chance to reconstruct his existence beyond the legal sphere of the depositions. The relationship he develops with Falcone is reflected on at length and bolsters the image of himself as an anti-mafia hero. While the depositions certainly limit the accessibility to the meeting between magistrate and criminal, the respect and openness with which Buscetta confesses offers an initial inkling into the dynamic that will come into sharper focus as Buscetta’s life story is explored by others in the following chapter.

### *Conclusions*

Through frequent echoes of literary topoi of mafia narratives, Buscetta has effectively begun the construction of a monument that will be added to and manipulated in

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<sup>103</sup> “Prego la G.I. di voler scusare se il mio racconto non è organico, data l’enorme congerie di fatti e avvenimenti che, male meno, ritornano alla mia memoria.” Buscetta, 126.

his subsequent autobiographical acts. He has embodied the role of the model mafioso and embraced the image of *his* mafia as a necessary resistance to a corrupt state. He has championed himself as a justice-maker for the common people and perpetuated a literary discourse through a narration of his personal experience. His deposition is almost formulaic in its recurrence to the topoi of mafia literature: he, the justice provider of the old mafia, meets with his former antagonist and submits himself to his will. He foregrounds the dichotomy between past and present forms of the sect to maintain his honor as a mafioso whilst performing an act that, on surface level, would paint him as a betrayer of mafia values. Through a display of his great moral disposition through the autobiographical technique of creating the monument of the self, he begins to position himself as a true mafioso in search of justice that, due to the sullyng ways of the Corleonesi, can only be found through a turn to legality.

## ***Buscetta Implacabile: The Construction of a Robin Hood Criminal in Maxi Trial***

### **Printed Press**

During the 1986 Maxi Trial of Palermo, a swarm of journalists from Italy and abroad descended on the Ucciardone prison to report on the story of the year. These journalists, endowed with their own cultural preconceptions, brought the trial to the national and international arena through their observations and inquiries. A trend quickly reveals itself in a chronological reading of print sources. The primary sources I analyze include daily national newspapers (*La Repubblica*, *Il Corriere della Sera*), monthly national tabloids (*L'Epoca*, *Espresso*, *Panorama*), and a local newspaper based in Palermo and directed at a Sicilian audience (*Il Giornale di Sicilia*). I examine these texts through the framework of *celebrated criminality*, a sub-branch of celebrity studies, that investigates society's fascination with criminals and the processes through which these criminals are transformed through media into celebrities. In the case of Buscetta, I argue that the press upheld the monument Buscetta created of himself in his depositions, and overwhelmingly supported his vision of himself as a hero. I argue that the ambiguous narrative that is brought to the public consciousness condemns the modern mafia whilst upholding Buscetta as a heroic criminal on behalf of morality and justice. As a case of media studies, I aim to exemplify how the media reinforces a division between old and new mafia, resulting in an upholding of the mafia myth when the possibility to brazenly debunk it was at its apex. Furthermore, this myth is ultimately utilized to condemn the modern mafia through stressing the departure of this form of *Cosa nostra* from the claimed origins and values of the organization.

### *The 'Robin Hood' Type*

In Paul Kooistra's 1989 seminal text *Criminals as Heroes*, he argues for a sociological approach to explaining "why particular criminals are chosen to play the role of a Robin Hood criminal."<sup>104</sup> To do so, he deems it "useful to examine (1) the Robin Hood criminal as a product- who he was, what he did, and to whom he did it--; (2) to look at the author(s) of this product-- who was marketing this figure to the public--; and (3) to describe the public that found social significance in the identity and actions of the Robin Hood criminal."<sup>105</sup> To fashion a Robin Hood figure, the criminal must be cast as 'common', identifiable, and as acting in the interest of others (and therefore, not solely for personal gain). All of these aspects may not apply to directly to Buscetta, or even to any other Robin Hood type character, but as Kooistra notes, not all factions of society will agree on the heroicism of the Robin Hood criminal as by his very nature he is divisive, despite his potency. The heroic Robin Hood type criminal, or rather the 'heroic criminal' is, in the words of Kooistra, "a symbol of justice outside the prevailing legal definitions of morality [...] the political nature of such a criminal is the fundamental reason for his existence."<sup>106</sup> Kooistra argues that "when broad segments become disenchanted with legal and political order [and] the perception that law and justice are at odds may become common,"<sup>107</sup> society becomes a fertile territory in which the social bandit can emerge and flourish.

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<sup>104</sup> Paul Kooistra, *Criminals as Heroes: Structure, Power & Identity* (Bowling Green, OH: Popular Press of Bowling Green, 1989), 39.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid., 42.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid., 36.

While Kooistra uses case studies in which the state law and social law are in antithesis, I argue that through media constructions, the ‘corrupt social order’ that Buscetta rebels against is not the law of the Italian State, but rather the law of the mafia. This change in configuration, I believe, occurs through a series of significant media choices, the most telling of which are: the presentation of the trial as a victory before it had even begun, depictions of the ‘new’ mafia (also referred to as ‘la mafia vincente’) as a corrupt control apparatus that undermines the needs of the populace, and the presentation of Buscetta as victor in his courtroom appearances. The media portrayal of these elements poses Buscetta and the mafia as antagonists. Buscetta comes to embody the role of a brave, moral, and sacrificial character, whilst the mafia is presented as cruel, violent, greedy, unruly, and detrimental not only to Buscetta’s family but to society as a whole.

As Kooistra mentions, the *heroicization* and *celebritization* of the social bandit may not be univocal in all media. The same is true for the case of Buscetta; in the selection of printed press which my analysis relies on, there are certainly varying viewpoints, political leanings, and audiences. The commonality to all of these sources are, however, the dichotomous portrayal of viewpoints in conflict. Despite occasional misgivings about the motives and sincerity of Buscetta, the rhetorical tendency of the press was to dramatize the tension between the two factions. According to Kooistra, the ability to view a criminal as a cultural product implicates an analysis of both the production of and reception of the product. As for the creation of the Buscetta product, the star witness had already done the bulk of the work in his depositions, but this does not preclude different media outlets from modifying, repackaging, or diluting the potency of the self-constructed Buscetta monument.

While Buscetta himself created a certain image of himself in the depositions, the press authorized that image and transformed it to a 'monument' endowed with political meaning.

In spite of the limitless possibility for debunking Buscetta's myth of the self, the Italian printed press media overwhelmingly took his narrative at face value, repackaging the mafia myth and Buscetta's role, and commodifying the figure to sell stories. From national daily newspapers (*La Repubblica*, *Il Corriere della Sera*) to the daily Sicilian newspaper (*Il Giornale di Sicilia*), the only one in color in 1986 and 1987, to the bright weekly tabloids (*Panorama*, *Epoca*), the whole nation was atwitter with news on the Maxi Trial. In intense moments of antagonism (for example, when the defendants' lawyers requested that Buscetta be subjected to both drug testing and a screening for mental health) the media seemed to rally behind the figure of the social outlaw. On the contrary, however, media portrayals of the 'mafia vincente' highlighted the cruelty, violence, greed, and unruliness of the defendants, at times verging on pure ridicule in portrayals.

Through the dual action of heroicizing Buscetta and condemning the individuals that composed the modern mafia, the media effectively maintains Buscetta's own version of his life—the version in which his morals never wavered and he was a mafioso as a mafioso was meant to be. If temporal divisions were significant in Buscetta's narrative, they become even more so in the trial. What is at stake is no longer Buscetta as individual; he is transformed in the media into a symbol of the 'old mafia' (also referred to as 'la mafia perdente'), a relic of an honorable past. The mafiosi at trial come to represent a mutation of what had once been honorable. In the confirmation of Buscetta's narrative, which is achieved through the rhetoric of the press, the mafia myth of noble origins is upheld, with Buscetta as an embodiment of those values. Through the same processes Kooistra defines

for making a celebrity criminal, Buscetta comes to embody the social bandit in the media: his own narrative called on is presented as true, resulting in a media affirmation of the mafia myth.

In conjunction with the theoretical approach utilized by Kooistra, the primary materials of the trial lend themselves to a thematic division. Through these themes, I analyze Buscetta as a 'social bandit' type, paying particular attention to how different news outlets contribute to this construction. I divide trial coverage into thematic sections that are related to the construction of cultural values, the portrayal of Buscetta as a Robin Hood type (as well as some significant counter-portrayals), the rhetorical creation of a 'corrupt social order,' and the coverage of the symbolic meeting between the bandit and the enemy, as represented through the in-court confrontation between Giuseppe (Pippo) Calò and Buscetta. In my chapter conclusion, I analyze portrayals of the December 1987 sentencing as they relate to the celebrated criminal.

## **A PORTRAIT OF CIVIL SOCIETY**

Of utmost importance in the construction of a social bandit type criminal, according to Kooistra, is the ability to cast the criminal in the light of rebel against a 'corrupt social order'. In addition to casting the corrupt social order, however, I believe the press coverage presents an alternative to the corrupt culture embodied by the mafia through various presentations of a culture of legality. The celebration of this legality coincides with the celebration of the trial itself. As the trial opened, newspapers exalted the modernity of the courtroom, the diligence and bravery of the judges. In addition, they speculated on the dangers of the trial setting. Through the focus on these specifics, the press portrays an



urgent desire for justice that, despite any hiccups, will overcome—the stakes of the trial are put at the forefront as the trial is transformed from ‘a mafia trial’ to a representational figuration of justice, it mutates from a trial to the be-all end-all of trials: *the Maxiprocesso*.

Returning to Kooistra’s necessary elements of the creation of a celebrity hero, he notes that disenchantment with the legal and political order is a typical background in which this character flourishes. Coverage of the criminal focuses, then, on how the heroic criminal rebels against a system which is incongruous with justice. Kooistra analyzes these situations exclusively through criminals that go against the state laws; in the case of the Maxi Trial the situation is inverted—the ‘heroic criminal’ is showed to rebel against the law of the mafia, in a full circle return to the law of the state. The efficacy of this process hinges, however, on the reversal of the conventions: the state must be portrayed as superior to the mafia for Buscetta’s act of rebellion to be read as a heroic act against a ‘corrupt social order’, that in this case is represented by *Cosa nostra*.

As I aim to show in this section, the rhetorical techniques utilized by various publications at the time foster an understanding of this trial as a crucial event in Italian history, equating the success of the trial with the capacity of the Italian justice system to serve justice. The culture of legality that is built up in the press happens in a number of significant moments, but as my interest lies in seeing how this sense of lawfulness is packaged for readers at the start of the trial, I analyze the coverage of three diverse scenarios that took place at the dawn of the trial, in February of 1986. The first involves the physical descriptions of the *Aula Bunker* that served as the courtroom, the second the presentation of the court, and the third a symbolic event that took place on 15 February 1986 in which mayors from different cities in the Italian territory descended upon the city

of Palermo to show their solidarity with the fight against the mafia. While reports on these events vary in style and content depending on the publication, they build the overall atmosphere at the trial to be one in which justice cannot be postponed—and in which the state entity is omnipresent in securing its successful carriage.

On February 9, 1986, the day before the trial begins, *La Repubblica* acknowledges both the spectacle and the technical value of the massive event. In its descriptions of the trial to take place, many of the themes of this chapter are brought to light. The headline reads: “La Piovra behind bars: The Curtain Rises for the Trial of the Century in Palermo.”<sup>108</sup> The language used points conveniently to the nature of the trial to take place; with the lifting of this metaphorical curtain, the truth will come to light. Furthermore, “La Piovra” was a nickname of the Sicilian mafia, and a TV program that ran from 1984-2001 that focused on the organized crime and its sordid connections to state entities. Within the pages of the same edition, Bettino Craxi (the then Presidente del Consiglio) is quoted in a bold text headline, “Sì, la mafia ha perso” (“Yes, the mafia lost”); the article goes on to quote the opinion that seems to be shared between he and his printer: “A sad spiral in Palermo has been broken. The mafia lost the dare that it posed to the highest levels of the State [...] the large trial that is about to open is the symbol of this defeat that through the perseverance of our fight will soon be complete.”<sup>109</sup>

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<sup>108</sup> “La Piovra alla Sbarra: A Palermo si alza il sipario sul processo del secolo.” “La Piovra va alla sbarra,” *La Repubblica* (Roma), February 9, 1986.

<sup>109</sup> “È stata spezzata a Palermo una triste spirale. La mafia ha perso la sfida che essa stessa aveva portato fino ai vertici dello Stato [...] il grande processo che sta per aprirsi e’ simbolo di questa sconfitta che la perseveranza della nostra lotta renderà presto totale.” Ibid.

In the February 11 edition of the same publication, the idea of the courtroom as a symbol of victory returns. In the midst of two-page spread on Luciano, the article states “the Ucciardone bunker, with its efficiency and its televised ruthlessness, represents the true challenge posed by the state to the criminals.”<sup>110</sup> The following article calls on the same idea and describes the aula bunker as a unifying symbol of organization of the magistracy, “quasi megagalattica,” (“almost mega galactic”) against organized crime. Through the repeated stress on the aula-bunker as a ‘new’ and technologically advanced space, the courtroom is given the task of representing a new and serious approach to organized crime. The article almost pokes fun at this idea, opening with a tongue in cheek commentary: “Courtroom bunker? But what courtroom bunker? This is the Spaceship of New Justice, which came from other worlds to show how to hold a Super-Trial at the threshold of the new millennium.”<sup>111</sup> The courtroom is shown to be representative of not only the new technologies, but of the new approach by the magistracy of the climate of legality that is at risk in the trial; the author, Gianpaolo Pansa, takes liberties by coming to the same conclusion that Craxi had: “The Spaceship will cause Cosa Nostra, ever victorious, to be knocked down forever.”<sup>112</sup>

In a similar manner to *La repubblica*, *Il corriere della sera* (which is often presented as an example of a politically neutral publication) underlines the courtroom structure as a

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<sup>110</sup> “Giampaolo Pansa, “E dall’Astronave spuntò Liggio,” *La Repubblica* (Roma), 11 Febbraio, 1986.

<sup>111</sup> “Aula-bunker? Ma quale aula-bunker! Questa è l’Astronave della Nuova Giustizia, planata da altri mondi a mostrare come si fa un Super-Processo alle soglie del Duemila.” Ibid.

<sup>112</sup> “Contro Cosa Nostra sempre vincente, L’Astronave, appunto, che la metterà al tappeto per sempre.” Ibid. The on-site courtroom constructed at the Ucciardone prison, it is significant to note, was a overhaul of the prison space that was referred to as the mafia’s hotel; construction of the bunker in this specific place serves to reclaim this territory and transform it into the stage of legality. See Jane C. Schneider and Peter T. Schneider, *Reversible Destiny: Mafia, Antimafia, and the Struggle for Palermo* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), Chapter 1.

symbolic image of the trial at hand. In the February 10 edition, the correspondent Bruno Tucci describes it as an ‘amphitheatre’ which, upon the ‘raising of the curtain’, will witness ‘a battle’ between the defendants and the accusers. The article describes the thirty cells of the courtroom as being ready to host “‘winners and losers’ carefully kept at a distance”<sup>113</sup> the statement underlines how media representations of the trial both call on and produce binaries.<sup>114</sup> On the same page, a photo of military tankards outside the ‘aula bunker’ is subtitled by a phrase that calls attention to the “impressive security service”<sup>115</sup> in place for the trial’s opening. Through a combination of the theatrical terms and the visual cue to the military intervention the onstage drama necessitates in the real world, *Il Corriere* furthers the idea of a cataclysmic turning point taking place at the battle of the bunker.

Before the trial began, an article in *Il Giornale di Sicilia* by Salvatore Cusimano offers a sneak-peek at the local take on the trial; he states that Palermitans are by now used to seeing the aula-bunker, but is curious about the “the set that will accompany this highly anticipated judiciary event that, in Italy, is without precedent.”<sup>116</sup> The article itself is descriptive and does not fall prey to turning the courtroom into a symbol. It describes hi-tech features (x-ray machines, a press section that is outfitted for journalists to be able to telephone easily to locations world-wide), and the different areas of the court dedicated to different usage (journalists, defendants, lawyers, *parti civili*).

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<sup>113</sup> “perdenti’ e vincenti’ accuratamente tenuti lontani,” Ibid.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid.

<sup>115</sup> “imponente servizio di sicurezza,” Ibid.

<sup>116</sup> “la scenografia che fara’ da contorno a quest’attesissimo avvenimento giudiziario che in Italia non ha precedenti,” Antonio Ardizzone, “Entra la corte, silenzio,” *Giornale di Sicilia* (Palermo), 10 Febbraio, 1986.

On 10 February, the opening day of the trial, the *Giornale di Sicilia*'s front page varied greatly from the national newspapers. While the other papers were touting the greatness of the aula-bunker and rendering it a symbol of justice, Antonio Ardizzone was giving a sober description of the trial. The frontpage headline states "Entra la Corte, silenzio," ("The Court Enters: Silence"). Beneath is a cartoon that shows the court from a point of view behind the judges as they take their seats, decked out in togas and sashes of the Italian flags. The point of view is fitting, as the following article states the newspaper's goal during the trial- to effectively and neutrally report on the trial the newspaper must put itself in the role of both judge and translator: "we don't know everything," Ardizzone warns. The goal of the publication during the time is "to observe, to clarify, and to try to report."<sup>117</sup> In contrast to the other newspapers, in which the trial already seems to be speeding towards success, the writers of *Il Giornale di Sicilia* put special emphasis on the Sicilian realities that have allowed a cohabitation between legal and illegal societies and economies.

Another novelty of the *Giornale di Sicilia* is that it embraces the trial not merely as a symbol of victory over the mafia, but as a call-to-arms to readers and politicians alike to continue in the what is seen as a both a legal and cultural revolution around the mafia. For the *Giornale di Sicilia*, the trial becomes a point of departure while elsewhere it is seen as the culminating point of arrival in which the fruits of past labor are harvested and shown to the nation as proof of a successful anti-mafia campaign led by the judges of Palermo. In Franco Nicastro's interview with Cardinal Pappalardo entitled "Palermo non è espugnata

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<sup>117</sup> "non sappiamo tutto,"; "osservare, chiarire e cercare di riferire." Ibid.

dalla mafia,” (“Palermo is not rid of the mafia”) on 4 February, the discussion turns to the difficulty in declaring a victory. Pappalardo discusses unemployment as a cause for the mafia’s success, but also notes that gray areas of ‘contiguity’ in which citizens (even the Catholic ones!) are unable to “distinguish the limit between legality and criminality.”<sup>118</sup> The *Giornale di Sicilia* gives space to discuss territorial realities that are not present in the national press; an excellent example is revealed in an article that discusses a series of protests *in favor* of the mafia that was ignored at the national level. The protests revealed a controversial side of the trial with signs that touted a positive side of the mafia for the citizens, claiming that at least when the mafia was in the territory, citizens had the possibility of finding jobs. Instead of celebrating the trial as a symbol of success, the newspaper addresses some of the issues that made the trial necessary; the culture of legality presented as deeply rooted in the national publications is only beginning to bloom in Sicily based on local coverage.

### *A Prepared Judiciary*

In addition to the positioning of the bunker as a symbol of legality, early phases of trial reporting stressed the seriousness and preparedness of the members of the court. Franco Coppola’s full reportage from the Feb 9/10 edition of *La Repubblica* quantifies the trial, with a headline that claims “Comincia il processo del secolo: Davanti ai giudici di Palermo 474 imputati per novanta delitti.”<sup>119</sup> The article opens with a quotation that

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<sup>118</sup> “distinguere il limite tra lecito e illecito.” Franco Nicastro, “Palermo non è espugnata dalla mafia,” *Giornale di Sicilia* (Palermo), 4 Febbraio, 1986

<sup>119</sup> Franco Coppola, “Comincia il processo del secolo,” *La Repubblica* (Roma), 9/10 Febbraio, 1986.

defines *Cosa nostra* as “an extremely dangerous criminal association that , with violence and intimidation, has spread death and terror.”<sup>120</sup> Even from the earliest phases, the trial is presented as one of protest against a corrupt faction of society.

Immediately following the mention of *Cosa nostra*’s terror campaign, Coppola describes the bravery of those affronting the problem. He intertwines the steadfast nature of the judges with the crimes that they investigate, modelling them as heroes to take on the task of preparing the trial that cost “years of work, sacrifices, and blood,” and will allow the punishment of criminals that caused “the darkness of 15 years of blood, drugs, excellent cadavers, [and] coexisting with political power.”<sup>121</sup> Throughout the article, Coppola calls on the numbers to impress upon the reader the massive event that takes place. He outlines the numbers of defendants and the natures of their crimes in one paragraph and in the following paragraph counters this by quantifying the legal action taking place:

Eleven judges (six public ministers and five investigating judges) committed to the maxi-investigation. An indictment of 8.632 pages divided in 40 volumes, plus another 22 volumes of attachments. A courtroom bunker built within the infamous Ucciardone prison, which covers an area of 7,500 square meters, has armored windows and doors, and cost around 30 million lire. There are 413 prosecution witnesses and who knows how many will be called on by the defense. There are 310 injured parties, 2,000 law enforcement agents in action (250 in the courtroom, 500 for outside surveillance, the others to ensure the safety of the *pentiti*, their relatives, and judges.<sup>122</sup>

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120 “una pericolosissima associazione criminosa che, con la violenza e l’intimidazione, ha seminato e semina morte e terrore.” Ibid.

121 “anni di lavoro, sacrifici e sangue”; “il buio di 15 anni di sangue, droga, cadaveri eccellenti, convivenze con il potere politico.” Ibid.

122 “undici magistrati (sei pubblici ministeri e cinque giudici istruttori) impegnati nella maxi-inchiesta. Una ordinanza a rinvio di giudizio di 8.632 pagine divise in 40 volumi, più altri 22 volumi di allegati. Un’aula bunker costruita all’interno del famigerato carcere dell’Ucciardone, che si estende per una superficie di 7.500 metri quadri con porte e finestre blindate e sarebbe costata intorno ai 30 miliardi. Quattrocentotredici testimoni dell’accusa, chissà quanti che saranno chiesti dalla difesa, 310 parti lese, 2.000 uomini delle forze dell’ordine mobilitati (250 dentro l’aula, 500 per i servizi di vigilanza all’esterno, gli altri a tutelare l’incolumità dei pentiti, dei loro parenti, dei giudici popolari, dei magistrati)” Ibid.

Through the quantification of the trial, Coppola stresses how many individuals are affected by the trial and the extent to which it is not only a trial of *Cosa nostra*, but a trial that will have an effect on Italian society as a whole. The contrast of the numbers reveals that despite the large number of defendants, the Italian state is superior in both preparation and numbers to the criminal association. The final sentence in which Coppola highlights the numbers of police involved in the protection reiterates the visual message provided by a photo, in which a soldier watches over a road block in Palermo. Through the visual show and verbal quantification of the police force, the reader is given the impression that the trial functions in the media as a symbolic recuperation of lost justice.

*Il Corriere della Sera's* coverage includes many of the same elements as that of *La Repubblica*, but seems to hone in on the local 'flavor' of the trial, through headlines that focus on how the trial affects daily life in Palermo. *Il Corriere della Sera* dedicates a half-page article to a meeting with Cardinal Pappalardo. As *Il Corriere* reports, Pappalardo's concern reveals the involvement of the entire city in the trials, expanding the meaning of the trial as one that will help Palermo recover its lost reputation. His dictate to forgive and educate come with heavy religious undertones, but the *Corriere's* reporting does not stress the religiosity of the message; their reportage underlines that the mafia is not a merely problem with certain individuals, but rather a societal ill.

In addition to giving ample space to Pappalardo's take on the phenomenon, *Il Corriere* takes a similar approach to *La Repubblica* when describing the roles of the various players in the courtroom drama. A week later, the same numbers are referred to in the



headlines “I giudici per interrogare i 467 mafiosi si riuniranno anche in seduta notturna”<sup>123</sup> and used to portray an image of a diligent judiciary overcoming the obstacles presented by the vastness of the trial. Multiple iterations of the trial as ‘mastodontic’ calls on the rhetoric of repetition to impress upon the reader the preparedness of the judiciary, the scope of the trial, and the culture of legality that necessitates the occurrence of a trial against organized crime.

### *Tutti i sindaci a Palermo*

Furthering this presentation of the trial as a reclamation of justice, the media’s attention to the event “I sindaci di tutta Italia a Palermo” supports the idea of a civil society dedicated to legality. The event, which was reported on in the 16/17 February 1986 edition of *La Repubblica*, was a representation of solidarity from mayors of different Italian towns and cities with Leoluca Orlando, mayor of Palermo. The reportage by Alberto Stabile stresses the idea of prosecuting the mafia as a national endeavor. He writes that, while some initially doubted the value of the gathering, that the overall outcome was to show that “the battle against the mafia is a national problem that involves the entire country.”<sup>124</sup> Through his reportage on the event, he describes the solidarity with the citizens of Palermo and with Orlando, and extensively quotes the mayors present. One line, in particular, stands out as significant for both the event and for what seems to be *La Repubblica*’s own take on the trial; the mayor of Genoa claims that the city of Palermo is “at the avant-guard

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<sup>123</sup> Adriano Baglivo, “I giudici per interrogare i 467 mafiosi si riuniranno anche in seduta notturna,” *Il Corriere della Sera* (Milano), 17 Febbraio 1986.

<sup>124</sup> “la battaglia alla mafia è una questione nazionale che coinvolge tutto il paese.” Alberto Stabile, “I sindaci di tutta Italia a Palermo,” *La Repubblica* (Roma), 16/17 Febbraio, 1986.

of civil society.”<sup>125</sup> Stabile’s presentation of the assembly of mayors coincides with the goal of the event; it casts the criminals as behaving against not mere individuals or as committing singular crimes but as being crimes against society as a whole. The stakes of the trial are continuously raised as they come to represent not only the ability of the trial to prosecute criminals; the meaning of the trial is extended as it is presented in a light that equates its success with the well-being of a moral Italy.

Through varying approaches, the messages that are conveyed to the public during early phases of the trial contain a clear imperative that justice be served. The atmosphere portrayed is one where legality is of utmost importance and is omnipresent; *Cosa nostra*, as an entity in direct confrontation with civil society, will not longer be tolerated. Perhaps the mafia was able to survive previously, but with the advent of the Maxi Trial the mafia has met its match: through portrayals of a prepared and diligent judiciary, the physical resource of the aula-bunker, and a national support network embodied in the judges, the press prepares the terrain for the conflicts that portray a binary nature of legality and thematically frames the trial proceedings.

### *Visibly Corrupt: The Modern Mafia Takes Form*

*“What would you do if the boy that died a few days from an overdose was your son, or if those were your kids that were murdered and put in the trunk of a car? You, who coldly order executions; you, who think you’re powerful just because you have money; you, man without a face, think about it. Deep down, you’re nobody.”*<sup>126</sup>

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<sup>125</sup> “all’avanguardia della società civile.” Ibid.

<sup>126</sup> “Che faresti se fosse tuo figlio quel ragazzo che pochi giorni fa è morto per overdose, o se fossero figli tuoi quelli trovati uccisi dentro cofani di macchine? Tu che ordini con freddezza le esecuzioni, tu che ti credi potente solo perché hai il denaro, tu uomo senza volto pensaci. In fondo non sei nessuno.” *Panorama*, 29 January 1986.

In January 1986, the tabloid Panorama was busy reporting on the schoolchildren of Palermo and their responses to the imminent trial, quoting their venomous words to those culpable for the drugs and homicides in the streets. The letter quoted above pinpoints a worthwhile approach to understanding the media's representation of diverse factions. With a renewed culture of legality being set as the base of the trial, different media outlets begin to introduce the characters that will fill the pages of the press for the months to come. In their presentations, an increased focus on the brute physicality of the individuals poise them as completely lacking the charisma and honor of a true mafioso. Through calling on these differences, different news outlets drive home the point that these men are deserving of their betrayal by Buscetta. They are the corrupt society that the heroic criminal must contend with, and his heroicism is fortified in the media with each line that describes them as murderous and greedy thugs.

Returning to Kooistra's theory of celebrated criminality, he denotes the commonplace of a reversal of roles between 'criminal' and 'victim' that takes place in order to exalt a figure that is typically condemned.<sup>127</sup> In a Sicilian context, the 'infame,' 'cunfirenti' and 'traditore' were ripe with negative connotations in popular culture, as evidenced through Sicilian sayings, music, and other media.<sup>128</sup> Media sources during the Maxi overturn the stereotype and instead present Buscetta as honest, and motivated by a sense of morality. Through this depiction, the 'criminal' becomes identifiable while the 'victim' is endowed with traits that makes them an enemy of social justice. In my analysis of the press

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<sup>127</sup> Kooistra, 27.

<sup>128</sup> Cfr: Diego Gambetta, "'In the beginning there was the Word.' The symbols of the mafia," *European Journal of Sociology/Archives Européennes de Sociologie* 32, no. 1 (1991): 53-77.

materials of the Maxi Trial, the portrayal of the new mafia (as Buscetta's 'victim') follows the same pattern as the victims of heroic criminals, who are "recognized at the time as corrupters of the law and oppressors of the common folk."<sup>129</sup> Within the schema of Kooistra's creation of the criminal hero, it is absolutely necessary that the criminal be seen as criminal due to an act of rebellion; in framing modern *Cosa nostra* as a corruption of the values that Buscetta embodies, the sense of conflict between he and *Cosa nostra* falls into a recognizable pattern of antagonism between a criminal hero and a corrupt social order.

As the defendants at trial are introduced in the press, they are set apart from the reader for their ontological difference from both the court and the audience. The mafiosi on trial are described from the outset as a different breed of criminal: at times the reporting on the mafiosi verges on ridicule, while at other times it reveals a pure exasperation with the antics described as taking place during daily hearings. In no instances did the goal of the publication seem to make the defendants relatable; on the contrary, I argue that through press coverage, the figures that emerge of the defendants portray a deep conflict with the traditional mafia 'values'. These portrayals are key in the alienation of Buscetta's 'victims' and work in conjunction with a simultaneous heroic rhetoric that has the effect of increasing the moral distance between the defendants and the *pentito*; calling on these factions' differences, newspapers present the new mafioso as both physically and morally inferior to the mafia that Buscetta represents.

Limiting these scenes proves very difficult due to the overwhelmingly negative portrayals presented on a near daily basis during the trial. Across all publications,

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<sup>129</sup> Kooistra, 36.

photography and physical descriptions of the mafiosi relegated them to a position opposite of that of the honorable and generous mafioso of myth. Again, starting with *La Repubblica* as a basis for comparison, the publication sensationalizes the defendants' behavior as indifferent to the suffering they allegedly caused: "inside [the courtroom], the tragic echo of blood, the pain of relatives and victims, the detachment of the defendants,"<sup>130</sup> they are described as idling in their cells in the court room, protesting their innocence or telling people not to photograph them. In the same edition, Luciano Liggio is photographed looking impatient seated behind bars. The title beneath him highlights his superbia and unwillingness to participate: "Liggio proclaims: I don't want a defense" ("Proclama di Liggio: 'Non voglio difesa'"); on page three he is described as having an "old face, very old" ("faccia vecchia, stravecchia") with a bloated look despite the hard features. He is described in his sweat suit, holding an extinguished cigar; like a tiger, always ready for the attack. The descriptions of Liggio portray him as lacking humanity, poise, and style--- elements essential in the *true* mafioso's inventory.

In fact, the mafioso 'look book', according to Antonio Nicaso in *Made Men*, had been a longstanding tool with which mafiosi could assert themselves in the public sphere. Through their clothing, they could establish themselves as 'men of honor'; be it with dark sunglasses, a cigar, or a well-cut suit, the elegance of a mafioso was a key signifier that he was to be both respected and feared.<sup>131</sup> Even the walk of a mafioso, the typical 'annaccarsi' in which the hips are pushed forward and the man struts confidently, was a sign of superiority and

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<sup>130</sup> "dentro [l'aula], l'eco tragico del sangue, il dolore dei parenti delle vittime, il distacco degli imputati," Pansa, "E dall'astronave spuntò Liggio."

<sup>131</sup> Antonio Nicaso and Marcel Danesi, *Made Men: Mafia Culture and the Power of Symbols, Rituals, and Myth*, (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2013), 69.

power. In the media's presentation of these bosses, the fear of these men has surpassed any respect they could merit, making their sweat suits, sunglasses and cigars read as a masquerade, their slacking postures and impassivity as indicative of a lack of pride.

By the edition of February 21, the clamorous arrest of Michele Greco, the so-called 'Pope of the Mafia' indicted for homicide and *associazione a delinquere* but living with a false identity, hit front pages. The headlines described Greco as extremely cruel, quoting Falcone as he describes him as "a serial killer, a terrorist" ("un pluriomicida, stragista"); the article that follows describes him as being indicted for an unending list of crimes, including the murders of Rocco Chinnici and Boris Giuliano, two of the 'Excellent Cadavers' for whom the trial aimed to serve justice. Falcone's point of view is again used to describe Greco as "the responsible party in these terrible leaden years that have thrown a city like Palermo and an entire country into despair."<sup>132</sup> Greco is described as "the boss of bosses, bowed to the power of the Corleonesi"<sup>133</sup>; while originally Greco made part of the 'old' mafia, he is portrayed to be corrupted by the 'new' clan of Corleone.

Additionally, he is described as having the final word in many deaths, and is noted as bringing 'macabri rituali' to the homicides; he is described as celebrating the death of Stefano Bontade (mafioso of the old guard) with a champagne toast and the statement, "The falcon is dead. Now it's time for the other one."<sup>134</sup> A few days later, the article states, Salvatore (Totuccio) Inzerillo (old mafia) was killed. Just two days later, *La Repubblica* ran

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<sup>132</sup> "il responsabile di questi terribili anni di piombo che hanno gettato nella disperazione una città come Palermo ed un intero paese." Anselmo Calaciura, "E da oggi il 'papa' compare in aula," *Giornale di Sicilia* (Palermo), 21 Febbraio, 1986.

<sup>133</sup> "il capo dei capi piegato al potere dei Corleonesi"

<sup>134</sup> "Il falco è morto. Adesso tocca all'altro." Ibid.

a spread on Greco in which an interview with the boss is published. The headline, in light of the information published a few days prior, reads as mocking: “The truth of the Mafia boss: ‘I’m even superior to the pope for my sense of conscious and depth of faith.’”<sup>135</sup> The steadfast faith that could have cited to support Greco’s morality is turned against him to paint him as delusional.

Simultaneously, the *Giornale di Sicilia* published an article which, while claiming Buscetta’s choice to collaborate was “for a calculation or interests, or, very probably, for vendetta,” still gives credence to his narration.<sup>136</sup> The article “Tutti gli uomini di Cosa Nostra” describes the two star pentiti (Buscetta and Contorno) in the beginning of the article and juxtaposes them with the defendants.<sup>137</sup> The article furnishes information about the defendants, presenting as established truth what had not yet been determined through the trial. In particular, the article describes the roles of the Corleonesi as they participate in a wide range of nefarious and illegal activities.

Pippo Calò, attributed the role of mafia banker, is made a symbol of a new brand of mafia that has established “a dense network of relationships with Roman criminals, the world of big business, the Camorra, deviated service works, black market” and is connected to “a subversive plan that brings mafia and neofascist terrorism together.”<sup>138</sup> The descriptions of these men reveal them in discrepancy not only with the old image of the

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<sup>135</sup> “La verità del capomafia: ‘Io sono anche superiore al papa per coscienza e profondità’ di fede.” Attilio Bolzoni, “La verità del capomafia,” *La Repubblica* (Roma), 23/24 Febbraio, 1986.

<sup>136</sup> “per calcolo, per interesse o molto probabilmente per vendetta.” “Tutti gli uomini di Cosa nostra,” *Giornale di Sicilia* (Palermo), 24 Febbraio, 1986.

<sup>137</sup> Ibid.

<sup>138</sup> una fitta rete di rapporti con la malavita romana, il mondo dei grandi affari, la camorra, i servizi deviati, l’eversione nera”; “un disegno eversivo che accomuna mafia e terrorismo neofascista.” Ibid.

mafia but as lacking any sort of morality that could redeem them in the public mind. Calling again on Koositra's analysis of the criminal hero, the necessity of portrayal of the criminal's victim as "the forces in society that are held responsible for the corruption of the state, adulterers who have led to the divorce between law and justice" has been fulfilled on a staggering scale; voices of empathy, sympathy, or even comprehension of the men behind bars is completely lacking in all aspects of the media discourse that surrounds them.<sup>139</sup>

It is not only Liggio, Greco, and Calo', the 'bosses', that are painted as corrupters and vicious criminals. When speaking of the masses of lower ranking defendants that populate the cells, the mentioned trends infiltrate their ranks. While the minor defendants are comprehensibly relegated to a secondary position in the press, the cases of coverage on medical mishaps reveals that the media disgust was not just reserved for the bosses. In particular, the *Giornale di Sicilia* reports on Vincenzo Sinagra<sup>140</sup> as a 'simulatore' who swallowed two building nails to slow down the delivery of justice. Referring to his nickname of "Tempesta," ("Storm") they describe how he had used these antics when he previously swallowed a mattress spring to avoid sentencing in a previous trial.<sup>141</sup> Two months prior, the *Giornale di Sicilia* had published a headline that read, "In aula scena d'epilessia."<sup>142</sup> The article that followed detailed the ever-increasing 'malori' of the defendants and described them as using these invented sicknesses to slow or even impeded the trial. The stance of the publication is far from sympathetic; instead, a sense of

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<sup>139</sup> Ibid.

<sup>140</sup> Vincenzo Sinagra is also the name of a minor pentito in the trial; the one I refer to here is the defendant.

<sup>141</sup> Salvatore Cusimano, "Tra pazzia e simulazione," *Giornale di Sicilia* (Palermo), March 6, 1986.

<sup>142</sup> Anselmo Calaciura, "In aula di scena l'epilessia," *Giornale di Sicilia* (Palermo), February 18, 1986.



exasperation is conveyed. A month later, however, this exasperation turns to benevolence in treating Buscetta when he arrives in secrecy from the United States to testify.

*'Sindacalista nato, socialista nato'*  
Buscetta takes the stage

In opposition to the unambiguous condemnation by the press of the defendant mafiosi, the portrayal of Buscetta reveals the pivotal role both his deposition and his presence played in the trial. As follows, the role assigned to him by the press was not without gray areas, which I will later indicate with Kooistra's claims in mind, i.e., that characters that reach this level of media significance do not necessarily do so unchallenged. Through portrayals of Buscetta at trial, a figure of epic proportions emerges. Despite his previous ties to organized crime, the media stresses the importance of establishing Buscetta's credibility as a rebel *against* organized crime, fashioning him into a heroic criminal against the mafia. Of all the defendants at trial (we must remember that Buscetta, and the other main pentito, Salvatore Contorno were in fact defendants for self-implicated crimes discussed in the depositions) the overwhelmingly heroic portrayal of Buscetta sets him in a world apart compared to even Contorno, but especially in comparison to the 'mafiosi vincenti' (Liggio, Greco, Calò) that embody the corruption of mafia values.

For a full understanding of heroicization of Buscetta as a 'criminal celebrity', I turn my attention to two significant instances in the trial narrative. I begin with the opening of the trial, where Buscetta's presence is marked by his absence, and continue to analyze media attention to Buscetta upon his surprise arrival in Palermo on 3 April 1986 through the culminating confrontation with Calò. Both the press and the populace are portrayed as

having a piqued interest in the figure; they stress the presence of what the *Giornale di Sicilia* refers to as a 'ressa' at the otherwise uncrowded aula bunker to see the 'supertestimone.' They even relay a story about a group of retirees from Pisa that traveled to Palermo to satisfy their curiosity in seeing a real mafioso bringing Buscetta into focus as the star of the trial.<sup>143</sup> Again, pinpointing the best examples to support my argument as Buscetta as 'heroic criminal' is a harrowing task as articles, interviews and photographs are rife in the media as they aim to quench the same curiosity that brought a group of retirees across the country to see an old myth in action. In the public spotlight, Buscetta's dominant representation is as a heroic criminal, but that does not preclude that other complex media discourses are at play as well.

Juxtaposing the press coverage of the defendants with that which focused on the figure of Buscetta proves extremely useful to understanding the semantic differences with which each type is endowed. While the new mafiosi are posed as diabolical killers, impassive masterminds, and sloppy corrupters of the trial, the discourse that revolves around Buscetta is certainly more complex. The complexity of this discourse reveals, however, Buscetta as a figure in opposition, a morally upright citizen that has been forced to cut ties with the mafia due to the mafia's own degeneration. Buscetta is poised as victorious, he is endowed with a spirit of retaliation, the same that Kooistra describes as an element of the heroic criminal, that serves to enhance an image of personal goodness.

In short, Buscetta is transformed into a criminal hero of the social justice type through the press's interest in all of the elements that, according to Kooistra, render

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<sup>143</sup> *Giornale di Sicilia*, 3 April 1986.

someone who has committed a major crime heroic: loyalty to friends, compassion for the downtrodden, courage in the face of danger, honesty, and cleverness in abundance.<sup>144</sup>

Through a focus on these traits, the media uses Buscetta's heroic portrayal to politicize his efforts. As Kooistra notes, a social justice criminal does not necessarily commit their crime(s) as a political act, but "fitted to the role, their identity can be infused with political meaning."<sup>145</sup>

The meaning that Buscetta's identity represents upholds the division between new and old mafia that he had called on in his depositions. The crux of my argument appears as Buscetta appears in court.<sup>146</sup> While the portrayal of Buscetta as potential savior had already begun to be constructed, his arrival set the tone for how the press would frame Buscetta at trial. The *Corriere della Sera* puts forth an idea that Buscetta had previously offered in his depositions. The essence of a true mafioso, they state, is that he cannot lie. Amidst the fear that Buscetta will not confirm his depositions, *Corriere della Sera* posits that because a 'mafioso bugiardo' is an oxymoronic statement, and Buscetta is a true mafioso, the confirmation of his statements should go off without a hitch. The headlines upon his arrival also confirm this narrative of Buscetta as maintaining the values of *Cosa nostra*, for example that of 4 April: "Buscetta implacabile: 'siete solo assassini.'"<sup>147</sup>

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<sup>144</sup> Kooistra, 22.

<sup>145</sup> Kooistra, 38

<sup>146</sup> While it is beyond the scope of this chapter, a comparison to Contorno's treatment by the press reveals large discrepancy. Contorno, perhaps for his role within the mafia (he was a picciotto), perhaps for his age, perhaps for his social status and sole usage of dialect, was *not* endowed with the same qualities that poised Buscetta as true mafioso and criminal hero. Rather, Contorno was presented as a reactionary that only decided to collaborate with the state, depending on the source, either to protect himself (he had barely escaped an assassination attempt by the Corleonesi) or by the urging of Buscetta (who allegedly allowed Contorno to kiss his hand before giving him permission and encouragement to break omerta').

<sup>147</sup> Adriano Baglivo, "Buscetta implacabile: siete solo assassini," *Il Corriere della Sera* (Milano), April 4, 1986.

The mafia myth is exploited by the press while Buscetta offers his testimony. Across almost all publications the image of Buscetta as he had created it in his deposition is brought to the front page. Buscetta is presented as endowed with all the makings of a Robin Hood hero: courage, intelligence, compassion, morality, and loyalty. That these traits coincide with many of the traits of the honorable mafioso makes for a doubly potent image of Buscetta: through renderings of Buscetta as 'true mafioso', he is also made hero. Through the same process, a temporal division, the same that Buscetta called on, is confirmed. Headlines describe him as "il supertestimone," "il boss dei due mondi," "il superpentito" but never refer to him as an "infame." Through their descriptions of the welcome he receives from the defendants ("figghiu di buttana", "cornuto"), a negative viewpoint of his collaboration is certainly acknowledged, but shown as pertaining only to those who are deserving of his betrayal. The inclusion of these comments underlines the antagonism between the two entities and polarize the discussion.

As for the courage, loyalty, and cleverness in abundance? His courage is amplified in the numerous instances that his credibility is under attack. Each time the lawyers of the defendants attempt to undermine Buscetta, the press uses it to his advantage. When they accuse him of being a mentally infirm drug addict, the headlines read "'La perizia psichiatra la voglio io!'"<sup>148</sup> and paint him as requesting the screening instead of being subjected to it. In a similar manner, the tabloids highlight Buscetta's loyalty to his family and ideals and his abundant cleverness. On February 16, *Espresso* runs an article ("Aspettando Buscetta") that describes how his life is leading up to the trial, detailing the loneliness he endures as he is

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<sup>148</sup> Adriano Baglivo, "'La perizia psichiatra la voglio io!'" *Il Corriere della Sera* (Milano), April 10, 1986.

in protective custody in the United States. He is described as passing the days by keeping up to date with any newspaper he can get his hands on. He is presented as a man with acute intelligence, his mind is said to stay sharp through rebus and anagram puzzles or, “la sua specialita’ [...] le parole crociate senza schema.”<sup>149</sup>

Significantly, the many heroic descriptions of Buscetta and his courageous act are in one instance rejected outright. In the 25 April edition of *Epoca*, a weekly tabloid published by Mondadori, the front page reveals another way to look at Buscetta in the article “La vera faccia di Buscetta.” The five-page article, which was published *after* Buscetta took the stand, points out a variety of information about the former mafioso that had elsewhere been ignored or otherwise glossed over. The author of the article, Angelo Barbieri, calls on the hypocrisies and inconsistencies in Buscetta’s testimony, but also points to the utility of using an ‘imperfect witness’ in such a trial:

But to Tommaso Buscetta [...] no one wants to contest that the mafia has never changed, that it has always been violence and abuse. Would he like to maintain that, in the 1950s at almost 30 years old, when he pledged eternal faith [to the mafia] that he did so convinced of joining an association based only on solidarity? Go ahead. As long as he continues to talk.<sup>150</sup>

Barbieri’s criticism of Buscetta bring to light the fact that Buscetta, while technically simultaneously both defendant and indicted, was for a very long time both privy to and complicit to the realities of the mafia. By Barbieri’s final resignation to this tendency, he

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<sup>149</sup> Pietro Calderone, “Aspettando Buscetta,” *Espresso*, February 16, 1986, 29.

<sup>150</sup> Ma a Tommaso Buscetta [...], nessuno ha voglia di contestare che la mafia non è mai cambiata, che è stata sempre violenza e sopruso. Vuole sostenere che quando negli anni Cinquanta, quasi trentenne, giurò eterna fedeltà lo fece convinto di essere entrato a far parte di un’associazione basata soltanto sulla solidarietà? Faccia pure. Purchè continui a parlare. Angelo Barbieri, “La vera faccia di Buscetta,” *Epoca*, April 25, 1986, 13.

reveals how an incomplete or sugar-coated version of Buscetta can be of great utility; 'purchè continui a parlare,' is the dictate— as long as he continues to speak.

Barbieri's revelation of Buscetta's utility as opposed to his morality reveal what I believe to be a driving rhetoric of other publications' assessment of the pentito. While *Epoca* delineates Buscetta as a self-serving manipulator, the other publications regurgitate Buscetta's own self-image as presented through his depositions. As Kooistra theorizes,

Virtually every criminal who has been labeled a hero has also been cast in the role of villain. Among the diverse tales of notorious criminals, two diametrically opposing legends may be sorted out-- one praising him as a saint and the other condemning him as a demon. Which of these versions captures the real outlaw? Probably neither.<sup>151</sup>

While these varying approaches likely both contain elements of truth, that the publications support a glorifying image of Buscetta point to the political usefulness that Kooistra describes as being the main reason for the Robin Hood hero's creation. Buscetta is given the benefit of the doubt, forgiven for refusing to speak about the '3<sup>rd</sup> level' of mafia affairs (the entanglement between organized crime and the regional and national political system), because without belief in his narrative the trial would crumble to pieces under the scrutiny of the public eye.

In addition to Barbieri's tongue-in-cheek commentary on Buscetta's motives, the *Giornale di Sicilia* presents an ambiguous rendering of the pentito. At times their articles seem to support the figure for his role in the trial, while at others they take a more critical approach to his depositions. Before his arrival, Buscetta was spoken of at length in

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<sup>151</sup> Kooistra, 25.

transcription of parts of the anti-mafia pool's "Rapporto sulla mafia degli anni 80."<sup>152</sup> The partial quotation that headlines the article states: "Why does Buscetta speak? He's animated by a strong spirit of retaliation."<sup>153</sup> The choice in headline calls on the idea of Buscetta as getting back at those who had betrayed his values. Vindication of wrongs done is a common theme that builds a criminal to a hero; through commentary by Falcone in the article, Buscetta is presented as the moral champion in the situation. In fact, his choice to break omertà is described as indispensable, providing "a key to reading the structure of the mafia."<sup>154</sup>

With Buscetta's appearance on the stand in April of 1986, the *Giornale di Sicilia* establishes a semblance of neutrality when reporting on his role; the majority of future reports on the figure rely on a variety of techniques that diminish the editorial voice. In reporting on Buscetta's first appearance on 3 Aprile 1986, a full page of print is dedicated to him. The three headlines of the page succinctly present three different approaches of the *Giornale di Sicilia*: the first reveals how they will use Buscetta's own words to present him ("Io pentito? Sono un uomo d'onore"<sup>155</sup>), the second reveals a tendency to call on third party or moral entrepreneur ("Parla il suo avvocato 'Don Masino non ha paura'"<sup>156</sup>), while the third ("Ressa per vedere il grande accusatore"<sup>157</sup>) reveals the newspapers' interest in

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<sup>152</sup> The report, produced by the Anti-Mafia Pool, details contemporary theories on the structure of the mafia and Buscetta's role in understanding the phenomenon. Cfr: Falcone, Giovanni, Lucio Galluzzo, Francesco La Licata, and Saverio Lodato, *Rapporto sulla Mafia degli anni'80: gli atti dell'Ufficio istruzione del Tribunale di Palermo: Giovanni Falcone, intervista-racconto*, SF Flaccovio, 1986.

<sup>153</sup> Perché parla Buscetta? È animato da un fortissimo spirito di rivincita. "Tra i segreti della mafia. Il giudice Giovanni Falcone racconta," *Giornale di Sicilia* (Palermo), February 2, 1986, 3.

<sup>154</sup> "una chiave di lettura della struttura mafiosa" Ibid.

<sup>155</sup> Anselmo Calaciura, "Io pentito? Sono un uomo d'onore," *Giornale di Sicilia* (Palermo), April 4, 1986, 2.

<sup>156</sup> Ibid.

<sup>157</sup> Ibid

public reaction to Buscetta. In future editions, editorial commentary is reduced to mere blips as the publication opts to publish daily proceedings “word for word” (“parola per parola”).

Before leaving space to Buscetta’s (and subsequently, Contorno’s) verbatim testimony, Anselmo Calaciura, author of the previously mentioned article “‘Io pentito? Sono un uomo d’onore,’” gives the reader of a description of Buscetta that carried over from the front page headline “Buscetta implacabile” of the same edition. The article begins:

Hard, sarcastic, outraged. Implacable and sharp as a knife, the ‘justice collaborator’ has begun to tell *his truth*, without pity or team morale, without hesitation or omertà, delving into the darkest crevices of Cosa nostra. [He speaks] against the Cosa nostra that took us by storm in the 70s-80s, ‘that *overturned the ideals*’ of the past, that unscrupulously killed children, helpless people, and made innocent blood run.<sup>158</sup>

As I aim to convey with the added italicizations, the *Giornale di Sicilia* fortifies the image of Buscetta as an astute character that opposes the injustices of the new *Cosa nostra* while rhetorically implying their neutrality by quoting Buscetta and stressing that this is *his truth*. Following this introduction, further portrayals of Buscetta in the Sicilian newspaper are read without the commentary of the journalists, allowing the self-presentation Buscetta creates speak for itself. The *Giornale di Sicilia* follows the ‘parola per parola’ approach during the trial: on each days’ proceedings, the redaction titles the articles with a disclaimer that states the words presented have not been edited and excuses the grammatical errors creating the outcome that the newspaper conveys a sense of neutrality

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<sup>158</sup>Duro, sarcastico, sdegnato. Una lama affilata e implacabile il ‘collaboratore di giustizia’ Tommaso Buscetta ha cominciato a raccontare *la sua verità*, frugando senza pietà nè spirito di corpo, senza tentennamenti né omertà nelle pieghe più segrete di Cosa nostra. Contro questa Cosa nostra d’assalto anni 70-80 ‘*che ha sovvertito gli ideali*’ di un tempo, che non si è fatta scrupolo di amazzare bambini e gente inerme, di fare scorrere sangue innocente Calaciura, “‘Io pentito? [...]’”



while giving the most complete picture of the trial. The first day they do this, however, they frame this choice as such, portraying Buscetta as worthy of being listened to for his expertise and bringing the old/new mafia dichotomy to the foreground:

The 'pentito numero uno' responded, unperturbed, to the questions of pres. Giordano, confirming what he had already said in two months of depositions in a small room in a Roman police station, starting 16 July 1984. In particular, the 'boss of two worlds' reconstructed in detail all the steps that brought about the affirmation of the Corleonese faction that, at this point, dominates Cosa nostra.<sup>159</sup>

The blip above the headline "Don Masino Buscetta implacabile contro i capi delle cosche 'Presidente, confermo tutto,'" portrays Buscetta as consistent in his accusations and as courageous for his performance on the stand. Furthermore, another subheading that introduces the proceedings speaks of the "values and ideals of the old Cosa nostra" ("valori e ideali della vecchia 'Cosa nostra'") and describes Buscetta as asking for a confrontation with Calò.

#### *Accuser and Accused: Duello in Aula*

Many defendants in the Maxi Trial originally asked to have the opportunity for a one on one confrontation with their accuser. Ultimately, only Calò would have the chance to speak to his accuser directly. While the reasons behind this are due to the legal restrictions in the request of one-on-one confrontations at trial, the portrayal of the Buscetta-Calò trial scenes tell a different story.<sup>160</sup> Newspapers explain that the confrontation can only take

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<sup>159</sup> "il 'pentito numero uno' ha risposto senza scomporsi alle domande del presidente Giordano, confermando quanto ha già raccontato ai giudici istruttori nel corso degli interrogatori che ha fatto dal 16 luglio 1984 per due interi mesi in una stanzetta della questura di Roma. In particolare, il 'boss dei due mondi' ha ricostruito dettagliatamente tutti i processi che hanno portato all'affermarsi dello 'schieramento' dei 'corleonesi' che ormai domina 'Cosa nostra.' Salvatore Cusimano, "Don Masino Buscetta implacabile contro i capi delle cosche 'Presidente, confermo tutto,'" *Giornale di Sicilia* (Palermo), April 4, 1986.

<sup>160</sup> The legal restrictions on face to face meetings in the courtroom is explained in the April 10 1986 edition of *La Repubblica*. According to Buscetta's lawyer, Armando Costa, the prerequisites for requesting a face to

place if a series of conditions are met that render the confrontation as necessary; these conditions were only necessary with Pippo Calò (despite Liggio's outbursts in which he claimed he deserved to speak to Buscetta, to look into his eyes). The confrontation between Pippo Calò and Buscetta presented by the *La Repubblica* headline as a "Duello in aula;" it is not merely a scene of conflict between two individuals, but an embodiment of the larger discourse taking place. By extension, it is mediated and then transformed into a battle between the old honorable mafia of Buscetta and the new bloodthirsty gang represented in the actions of Calò. Through this 'duel', Kooistra's 'heroic criminal' is shown not only as a hero for his courage, but as victorious against his victim.

Newspapers printed the events in a manner that framed Buscetta as a social hero that acted in protest of this degradation, as a stable and moral crusader that verbally decimated his former friend. Additionally, the press made varying claims about the lack of other confrontations with Buscetta, stating that the other defendants were mysteriously silent after seeing Calò's obvious defeat. The *Corriere della Sera* ironizes this on April 19, days after the meeting:

[...] the first weeks of the trials were truly characterized by a series of interrogations of presumed mafiosi who wanted to speak directly, like Calò, with Buscetta. Instead, yesterday evening, no one remembered this anymore. There's an explanation: after the 'face-to-face' encounters between the big bosses [...] the others, evidently, preferred to avoid confrontations destined to reinforce the believability of the two 'infami' to the judges <sup>161</sup>

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face include that the accuser and the accused previously knew each other. Costa explains his resistance, "Non dimentichiamo, [...] 'che il confronto non e' un mezzo di prova ma un espediente processuale per valutare prove o indizi già esistenti. A che serve disporre dei confronti che gli imputati vogliono solo per fare gazzarra, per insultare Buscetta? Mi oppongo perciò a tutti i confronti, tranne a quello con Pippo Calò." Franco Coppola, "Faccia a faccia con Calò poi Buscetta esce di scena," *La Repubblica* (Roma), April 10, 1986.

<sup>161</sup> [...] le prime settimane del processo furono caratterizzate proprio da una serie di interrogatori volanti che la maggior parte dei presunti mafiosi condensò in poche battute invocando soprattutto il confronto con Buscetta e Calò. E invece ieri sera, nessuno si è ricordato più. C'è una spiegazione: dopo i 'faccia a faccia' con i più grossi capomafia [...] gli altri, evidentemente, hanno preferito evitare confronti destinati a rafforzare nei

By framing this lack of confrontations in this manner, the newspaper approves of Buscetta's performance and simultaneously paints the mafiosi as cowards when in reality there simply weren't the legal conditions to allow them.

In the confrontation with Calò, Buscetta as criminal hero is seen in juxtaposition to the 'victims' of his crime, or rather the 'corrupt social order' with which he was disillusioned. The reporting of this event reveals specific instances in which press coverage was far from neutral, but rather rallied behind the figure of Buscetta portraying him as justifiably releasing his rage on Calò, who he accuses for the death of friends and family. *Il Corriere della Sera* quotes the sections of the confrontation in which Buscetta speaks of an act of betrayal in which Calò had Buscetta's son murdered, "you caressed him, and then trampled him" ("l'hai accarezzato e poi calpestato"). The recurrence to the higher loyalty of the blood family puts forth the image of Buscetta as family man, calling on the aspect of the criminal hero that is commonly presented as acting not only for himself, but for his adherence to a heightened sense of morality.

The *Corriere della Sera's* analysis of the confrontation presents Buscetta as clearly victorious, the front page shows a photo of a blubbing Calò under the headline "drammatico confronto in aula. Buscetta a Calò: hai fatto uccidere." The full article by Adriano Baglivo on page seven, while claiming to present the event verbatim, portrays the most dramatic moments of the confrontation (when Buscetta verbally decimates Calò for having ordered the murder of his family member; when Calò weakly veils a death threat

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giudici popolari la convinzione della buona attendibilità dei due 'infami.' Felice Cavallaro, "Contorno ha resistito ai difensori, Buscetta forse già volato negli Stati Uniti," *Corriere della Sera* (Milano), April 19, 1986.

with ‘non ti preoccupare’, implying Buscetta will have his turn). The article does call on direct quotations of the event (as do many of the other publications) but offers significant commentary between the blips of quotations, guiding the reader to see the meeting as “a clash between two giants that relive the tragedy of transversal vendettas”<sup>162</sup> and declaring that Buscetta speaks calmly while Calò “si è difeso finchè ha potuto, è stato schiacciato dalle parole di Buscetta.”<sup>163</sup>

*La Repubblica*, too, presents the act as one of courage through a description of a nervous Buscetta before he overcomes the obstacles to present himself in court as “un uomo di ghiaccio.” *La Repubblica* describes Buscetta before the event as:

devoured by the anxiety of not being believed, doubtful of the efficacy of certain answers of his, his nerve challenged by the tension of waiting before hours of interrogation. So, Don Masino passes the nights awake, and in the morning, when he should present himself lucidly and serenely in the courtroom bunker, is already in pieces.<sup>164</sup>

This description of Buscetta is shortly thereafter surpassed by *La Repubblica*’s analysis that despite the difficulties, Buscetta overcomes: “He’s alone against two hundred lawyers who try to put him in difficulty, try to play tricks that aren’t always orthodox, to catch him in a contradiction. That said, the *superpentito* stays the course. A man made of ice.”<sup>165</sup>

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<sup>162</sup> “uno scontro tra due giganti che rivivono la tragedia delle vendette trasversali” Adriano Baglivo, “Buscetta accusa Calò: ‘Hai fatto uccidere,’” *Il Corriere della Sera* (Milano), April 11, 1986, 7.

<sup>163</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.

<sup>164</sup> “divorato dall’ansia di non essere creduto, dubbioso sull’efficacia di certe sue risposte, i nervi messi a dura prova dalla tensione dell’attesa prima di ore di interrogatorio poi, don Masino passa le notti in bianco e la mattina, quando dovrebbe presentarsi nell’aula bunker lucido e sereno, è già a pezzi” Coppola, “Faccia a faccia con Calò poi Buscetta esce di scena.”

<sup>165</sup> È solo contro duecento avvocati che tentano di metterlo in difficoltà, di tendergli trabocchetti non sempre ortodossi, di coglierlo in contraddizione. Eppure la linea del *superpentito* non denuncia falla. Un uomo di ghiaccio.”*Ibid.*

Because so many publications refer to ample direct quotations of the confrontation, the narrative Buscetta and Calò bring to the public is often presented as non-mediated despite the significant commentary each newspaper contributes. Reading between the lines, however, across the range of publications Buscetta is presented as having had the best over Calò. He is praised for his eloquence, while Calò is ridiculed for his blubbering. He is presented as more intelligent, more calm, and morally superior to Calò, who comes to represent not only himself, but all of the ‘victims’ that the social hero had to contend with to be true to his ideals.

#### *Possible Outcomes: A Hero for the State?*

Even after Buscetta’s departure from the trial, his contribution was still present in the press. Newspapers report that as quickly and mysteriously as he arrived in Palermo, he departed. In the interim period between his April 1986 courtroom appearance and testimony and the December 1987 sentencing, his name was less common in the reports of daily proceedings.<sup>166</sup> Articles and analyses in the press about the 1987 sentencing, however, univocally bring his name back to the front page. In my analysis of this return to the foreground, I show how this heroic figure comes to be used as not only a symbol for renegade justice, but a symbol for that justice on behalf of the Italian state. News outlets’ interpretations and portrayals of the events vary, but the centrality of the figure of Buscetta

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<sup>166</sup> This could be owed to a variety of factors: first, as Buscetta had performed his role, it logically follows that he is less present in the press. Second, as *il Corriere della Sera* points out in its 1987 year-end commentary of December 31, 1987, the press coverage in general of the process experienced a massive drop-off after Buscetta’s presence as the general behavior of both lawyers and defendants was filled with less protest and more efficiency to move the trial towards its close.

in the press lead me to couple the overwhelming victory of the first sentencing with the presence of the ‘criminal hero’ that is depicted as waging a battle for moral justice.

According to both *La Repubblica* and *Il Corriere della Sera*, Buscetta’s presence at trial represented a heavy blow to the mafia, and the upholding of his theorem was a success to be celebrated. In the *Corriere* edition of 16 December, 1987, the anticipation of the following days results is owed as much to the curiosity of the verdict as the curiosity of whether the Buscetta theorem would be upheld. The following day, in the article by Alessio Alticheri (“La mafia all’ergastolo”) that occupies the front page and speaks of the sentencing as ‘a new page’ in Palermo’s history. The first novelty, in this new era, is the confirmation of

the combination of revelations and intuitions that fall under the name of the ‘Buscetta theorem.’ The great pentito said that the mafia is governed by one commission, the ‘cupola’, that approves everything or at least leaves things to happen. And the judges believed that this is really how the mafia works.<sup>167</sup>

Furthermore, in the in-depth article by Felicia Cavallaro featured on page nine (“Buscetta, la sua verità ha smantellato un potere di morte”) further credits Buscetta as the victor in the trial. The upholding of his depositions is credited with bringing about a “an overwhelming force capable of revealing the dark truths of a rooted, powerful, connected and deep-seated criminality.”<sup>168</sup> Buscetta, through his act of speaking, is credited with

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<sup>167</sup> “quell’insieme di rivelazioni e intuizioni che va sotto il nome di ‘teorema Buscetta’. Il grande pentito disse che la mafia e’ governata da un’unica commissione, la ‘cupola’, che tutto approva o almeno lascia fare. E i giudici hanno creduto, la mafia è davvero così” Alessio Alticheri, “La mafia all’ergastolo,” *Il Corriere della Sera* (Milano), December 16, 1987.

<sup>168</sup> “forza travolgente capace di svelare le verità occulte di una criminalità radicata e potente, collegata e ramificata.” Felicia Cavallaro “Buscetta la sua verità ha smantellato un potere di morte,” *Il Corriere della Sera* (Milano), December 16, 1987.

causing a monumental change in revealing these truths that were for long “considered inaccessible and indemonstrable, up until the moment of the large ‘confessions.’”<sup>169</sup>

In framing these large claims about Buscetta’s importance, Cavallaro frames his decision as one rooted in courage. The article harks back to the days of his decision to collaborate and reiterates the themes of sacrifice and revenge, describing the passages that led to his drive to seek justice. Through bellicose diction, the figure of Buscetta as survivor and justified warrior underlie his choice: “he has crossed hell forwards and backwards [...] an immense cemetery of murdered relatives.”<sup>170</sup> The author concludes that Buscetta’s role in the trial was simultaneously decisive and due to his survival of the “most difficult and insidious trial, that of the ‘objective cross-check’”<sup>171</sup> In sum, due to Buscetta’s initial bravery and subsequent honesty that was proved through successfully navigating the most difficult of situations, results, according to Cavallaro is that “the checks are transforming themselves to facts, the accusations become stones.”<sup>172</sup>

This framing of Buscetta’s role is not unique to the *Corriere della Sera* but appears in *La Repubblica* as well, where on 17 December the front-page headlines read: “Ergastolo ai boss. I giudici hanno creduto a Buscetta. La mafia degli anni 80 è stata decapitata.” Furthermore, this linking of the trials success to Buscetta’s role upholds the old-new mafia division to which he clung. Buscetta, whose confessions (along with those of Contorno, who is mentioned here but virtually forgotten elsewhere) opened “a huge tear in the fabric of

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<sup>169</sup> “considerate inaccessibili, indimostrabili fino al momento delle grandi ‘confessioni.’” Ibid.

<sup>170</sup> “ha attraversato, avanti e indietro, l’inferno [...] Un immenso cimitero di congiunti ammazzati.” Ibid.

<sup>171</sup> “prova più difficile e insidiosa, quella del ‘riscontro obiettivo.’” Ibid.

<sup>172</sup> “le verifiche si trasformano in fatti, le accuse diventano pietre.” Ibid.

the honored society,"<sup>173</sup> is again credited with the success of the trial. Large claims are made that depict Buscetta as having guided the court to judgement day, going as far to conclude that the mafia has been decapitated. Calling again on a binary division between an antagonist mafia and the legal state, the publication comments on the novelty of the trial and declares it a victory for civil society: "For the first time in the judiciary history of this country, it's been possible to put bosses, killers, and associates of Cosa nostra behind bars: civilization against barbarism, the law against violent bloodshed. The long trip... has concluded."<sup>174</sup>

This claimed conclusion, however, was swiftly overturned with reports the next day of the 'transversal killing' of Salvatore Ciulla (presumed mafioso that was acquitted of charges) the same day of the sentencing, just an hour after his release from the Ucciardone. While the *Giornale di Sicilia* was keen to point out from the day of sentencing that the trial was not a point of arrival but a point of departure for further mafia investigations, both *La Repubblica* and *Il Corriere* are so wound up in the success of the trial that the following day (18 December) they must concede that their celebrations were a bit too soon. In this admission, *Il Corriere* calls upon the words of Giovanni Falcone to warn readers not to be overzealous in singing victory: "Let's not get comfortable with the idea that the sentencing is a definitive step. It's a point of departure. A man like Ciulla isn't killed if there's not knowledge of the full support of the mafia."<sup>175</sup>

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<sup>173</sup> "uno squarcio enorme nelle maglie dell'onorata società." Ibid.

<sup>174</sup> "Per la prima volta nella storia giudiziaria del paese e' stato possibile mettere alla sbarra capi, killer e gregari di Cosa nostra: la civiltà contro le barbarie, il diritto contro la pratica della violenza sanguinaria. Il lungo viaggio... si è concluso." Ibid.

<sup>175</sup> Non culliamoci nell'idea che la sentenza sia un passo definitivo. E' un punto di partenza. Non si ammazza uno come Ciulla se non c'è la consapevolezza di un appoggio totale della mafia." Ibid.



The *Giornale di Sicilia*, instead, took a more cautious approach to reporting on the sentencing, underlining that yes, the Buscetta theorem was upheld, but only in part. Making note of the acquittals as proof of objectivity and fairness, on the day of sentencing the newspaper conveys that not everything Buscetta said was verified. Most importantly, the *cupola* theory, or rather, that all homicides were ascribable to a mafia commission, and therefore each mafioso would be held responsible for each murder, was not accepted. The result was that of the indicted, 150 were acquitted of murder, while 114 were acquitted overall.

The *Giornale di Sicilia's* conclusion, however, is that the trial was an overall success because it represented a change in the State's position vis-à-vis the mafia: while Buscetta's role was fundamental in contributing to this change, his name is barely mentioned in the reporting. According to Giovanni Pepi,

[...] It's not the omnipotent, uncatchable, and mysterious organization, consecrated by ugly myths. Its power is controllable, or in any case, able to be dominated. Its bosses are catchable. Its rules are knowable and now known. From the trial papers, it emerges that we are in front of a world that has rules and rituals, levels of command and hierarchies, terrible efficiency and bloody strength. But, also, weaknesses and ambiguities, strategical confusion, improvised upheavals and bloody vendettas.<sup>176</sup>

While each of the ontological changes in understanding the mafia could be credited back to the confessions of Buscetta as an objective affirmation of previous investigations, Pepi only refers to the case files as being the keepers of this new knowledge. Hesitant to give the

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<sup>176</sup> non è l'organizzazione onnipotente, inafferrabile, misteriosa tramandata o consacrata da brutti miti. Il suo potere è controllabile, comunque dominabile. I suoi capi sono afferrabili. Le sue regole conoscibili ed ora conosciute. Dalle carte processuali emerge che siamo davanti a un mondo che ha regole e rituali, livelli di comando e gerarchie, terribile efficienza e forza sanguinaria. Ma pure debolezze e ambiguità, confusioni strategiche, rivolgimenti improvvisi e vendette sanguinose. Giovanni Pepi, "Maxicondanne," *Giornale di Sicilia*, (Palermo), December 19, 1987.

credit to Buscetta, the newspaper again tries to maintain a semblance of neutrality in its proceedings.

Returning to Kooistra's idea of the criminal hero, it bears remembering that not all of those will agree with the criminal's behavior and representation. It seems clear that the *Giornale di Sicilia* did not quite build Buscetta to the heroic figure that appeared across the printed press. While this tendency of praising Buscetta pervaded the other news sources, it is merely one element in the construction of the criminal hero. As no exception, the Sicilian newspaper took part in the other techniques that caused Buscetta to be read as a hero in opposition: through the binary portrayals of blood thirsty criminals juxtaposed to a portrait of civil society, through an innovative push for justice and the detailed presence of the *superpentito*, Buscetta as heroic criminal emerges and is bolstered to varying levels across the publications.

## **Buscetta in Dialogue: A Harvest of Celebrity Potential for Political Aims**

Upon Buscetta's collaboration with the Italian state, a series of narrative inquiries into his life and experiences were published. These publications, which span from 1986 until 1999, situate themselves in a unique semiotic position: neither autobiography nor interview, biography or novel, they are central to exploring character construction in life-writing. I suggest that these texts, through a variety of rhetorical and generic techniques, contribute to a conception of Buscetta as celebrity. The texts, which treat Buscetta as a larger-than-life individual, contribute to socio-political discourses surrounding *pentitismo*, mafia, and state. Buscetta is afforded the possibility to further the claims he made in his depositions; he continues to speak about the mafia in these texts, but the narrative is reiterated and expanded upon for a mass public. These texts go in depth into the life story of the *pentito*, revealing a public curiosity akin to that shown to movie stars. The Buscetta (media) monument is presented to a mass public through these interventions, and is done through an acute attention to Buscetta's private life, family, and early life. Conceiving of these literary acts as part of a multimedia character construction, I aim to understand the role coauthors and biographers ascribe to him, and the political meaning created from his narrative.

The texts I examine span from the time of the Maxi Trial until shortly before Buscetta's death. The initial deposition displayed traits that echoed the topoi of mafia literature through Buscetta's self-portrayal of himself as a safe-keeper of justice, and as belonging to a temporally removed and genuine mafia. The third topos consists in the formulaic encounter between mafioso and state entity, one that is played out first with

Giovanni Falcone. Considering this encounter as a standardized plot element in *literature* about the mafia, the historical life encounter shares many similarities with the literal type. By considering these narrative overlaps, I aim to see what meanings are brought to a mass audience through the figure of Buscetta-as-star. In Richard Dyer's *Stars*, a seminal work in the area of celebrity studies, he describes stars as a 'structured polysemy,' or rather, a construction endowed with the capability of making meaning.<sup>177</sup> Conceiving of Buscetta as star allows for a worthwhile reflection on the interplay between literary creations and historical events, calling for a recognition that historical events are always accessible on through narrative constructions. Dyer conceives stars as authored by multiple voices in multiple medias stating that, "a star is an image, not a real person, that is constructed (as any other aspect of fiction is) out of a range of materials."<sup>178</sup> He states that stars are generally groomed to meet the expectation of an audience. In a society where the dominant mafia myth is of an innocuous past, I argue, Buscetta's construction across multiple literary texts allows this myth to flourish. As a commodity, an image and a story to be bought and sold, Buscetta-the- star is packaged for a mass market. His constructed image was capitalized upon from the time of the Maxi Trial, I claim, and it continues to be in 2019 with the production of a feature length film that draws on the Buscetta narrative (*Il Traditore*, Marco Bellocchio, forthcoming).

Building on Dyer's work, Christine Geraghty aims to delineate different typologies of (film) stars to understand how meaning is produced.<sup>179</sup> She accentuates that the film star

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<sup>177</sup> Richard Dyer, *Stars* (London: British Film Institute, 1998), 3.

<sup>178</sup> Dyer, 3.

<sup>179</sup> In addition to Dyer's and Geraghty's work on stars and celebrities, Edgar Morin's *The Stars* bears mentioning as well for his conception of the star-system serving an intermediary role between real and

possesses a dual-nature that represents a contrast between the ‘performing presence’ and what happens ‘off-stage.’ In her division of types of stars, I believe that the typology that Geraghty delineates as the ‘star-as-celebrity’ model can offer a deeper understanding of the processes that transformed Buscetta from mafioso to celebrity. According to Geraghty, the ‘star-as-celebrity’ model prioritizes a star’s personal life over their roles. This idea falls in line with Graeme Turner and his idea of pin-pointing celebrity creation:

we can map the precise moment a public figure becomes a celebrity. It occurs at the point at which media interest in their activities is transferred from reporting on their public role ... to investigating the details of their private lives.<sup>180</sup>

As these texts demonstrate, a similar trend takes place with Buscetta. If we can conceive as his ‘star role’ as being that of breaking omerta’ and testifying against the mafia, information beyond these scopes are superfluous. That Buscetta was the youngest of seventeen children, or that he lost his virginity to a prostitute at a very young age or that he greatly admired Lucky Luciano is irrelevant to the *legal* role he played. And yet, these pieces of information, and many other alongside them, are rife in the narratives that surround Buscetta. To observe and report on the ‘true lives’ of former-mafiosi was a novelty in the Italian context; but the themes and tone of the Buscetta biographies share similarities with the Italian-American works of the same genre. From Lucky Luciano’s now out of print *Last Testament of Lucky Luciano* (1975) to Joseph Bonanno’s *A Man of Honor* (2003), the stories ‘as told by’ the mafioso figure have maintained a market presence in the United State as in

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imaginary. His was one of the first studies addressing the influence of stars on everyday life, and on how the star fulfills viewer desire.

<sup>180</sup> Turner 2004:8.

Italy.<sup>181</sup> A deep interest in Buscetta's personal life pervades these texts and supports a 'Buscetta as celebrity' theory that amplifies and consolidates the image of Buscetta as 'true' mafioso.

That this interest in the personal life of Buscetta should take the form of biography is not surprising, but rather represents a commodification of the Buscetta image. The texts seem to satisfy audience expectations of the types of narratives that surround the mafia. Analyzing these texts through this lens, I am inclined to view Buscetta as embodying two typologies outlined by Geraghty: the 'star-as-celebrity,' and the 'star-as-professional.' These models support a reading of Buscetta as authored not merely through biographical experiences essential to the 'star-as-celebrity' model, but also that these narrations serve the image of Buscetta as 'professional.' Rather, previous works, while dealing with fictional mafiosi, had already created models not only of what the mob was, but of how a mafioso behaved. Geraghty discusses how audiences expect to see stars performing in roles that 'fit' their persona, filling roles that correspond to generic expectations of the star. She evidences this with the example of Marilyn Monroe embodying the persona of an innocent, beautiful, sex goddess both on- and off-screen. What results is a dissolution of Monroe's 'real' personality as it is absorbed by her professional performances. Geraghty makes note that when this occurs, the resulting text provides pleasures of stability, repetition and the guarantee of consistency; too much discrepancy between the star and his or her role of

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<sup>181</sup> Joseph Bonanno, *A Man of Honor: The Autobiography of Joseph Bonanno* (London: Macmillan, 2003); Richard Hammer and Marvin Gosch, *The Last Testament of Lucky Luciano* (New York, NY: Random House Publishing Group, 1981).

professional leads to viewer disappointment.<sup>182</sup> This tendency to ‘fit’ the role of the star to the on-screen character is seen at work here as well, and satisfies reader expectations about mafiosi. The texts that focus on him never attempt to disrupt the narrative that Buscetta began to develop in the depositions. Rather, across the board, the story that emerges of Buscetta is of a familiar character. Explorations of his personal life help serve to satisfy a natural interest in the star figure and simultaneously portray him as the professional (and traditional) mafioso.

The ultimate goal in contemplating these narratives is to deduce the possible meanings that Buscetta’s narrative is endowed with through these acts. If a star is a ‘constructed polysemy,’ the different narratives that surround that star produce different meanings. I contest that these narratives satisfy reader expectations about the mafia precisely through capitalizing on the celebrity figure of Buscetta as true mafioso. They confirm temporal divisions and the true mafioso’s honor, and do so through the third trope of literature about the mafia. The meeting between mafioso and the State representative moves from the pages of fiction to those of biography, interview and co-authored autobiography. These meetings come to fulfill a literary prophecy, but the meaning they bring forth belongs to the empirical world, not to literary ones.

I examine a series of texts that participate in a multivocal construction of Buscetta as a monument to a perceived past of a justifiable mafia. The authors and coauthors of these texts are media authorities and scholars focused on the Sicilian mafia. From Enzo Biagi’s *Il Boss è solo* (Mondadori 1986), to the aftermath of Falcone’s death with Pino

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<sup>182</sup> Geraghty, 189-191.

Arlacchi's *Addio Cosa nostra* (Rizzoli, 1994), to a final testimony of Buscetta on the metaphorical eve of his death, coauthored by Saverio Lodato, *La mafia ha vinto* (Mondadori, 1999), the texts represent a continued interest in the Buscetta narrative. This narrative, however, is adapted to the dynamics of celebrity culture—that is to say that these forays into Buscetta's life are intended for a mass audience that already has certain expectations of the mafia, Buscetta is used to anchor the discourses these authors produce within the historical world, serving as a monument to an era of optimism against organized crime.

Within this celebrity authoring by multitudes, I am particularly interested in how certain aspects of the Buscetta monument are exploited to further socio-political discourses, examining how the bricolage of materials that help us to understand Buscetta can help us understand the mafia and antimafia discourses taking place in the public sphere.

### *Il boss è solo*

*Buscetta: La vera storia di un vero padrino*, Enzo Biagi (1986)

Buscetta's depositions provide an excellent baseline for understanding the *pentito's* self-image. His claims were validated through the initial 1986 juridical acceptance of the 'Buscetta Theorem' and the subsequent 1992 confirmation by the Italian Supreme Court of the nineteen sentences of life imprisonment and prison terms amounting to more than two thousand years.<sup>183</sup> Before, during, and after the trial, lawyers and journalists alike searched

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<sup>183</sup> Puccio-Den, Deborah, "Judging the Mafia: Categorization under Law and Moral Economies in Italy (1980–2010)." *Diogenes* 60, no. 3-4 (2013): 18.



for falsity in Buscetta's words, but to no avail. The biggest criticism Buscetta faced was for never speaking about the so-called "Third Level" of mafia affairs, or rather, the links between the society and Italian politics on a local, regional, and national scale.

Unsurprisingly, journalists sought interviews with Buscetta to discuss this void, his opinions on the anti-mafia, and to further prod him about his decision to collaborate.

Immediately following the trial, journalist Enzo Biagi was granted access to interview Buscetta from his undisclosed location in the United States. Enzo Biagi (1920-2007) was considered one of the fathers of Italian journalism, was already renowned at the time as a driving force behind the daily *Corriere della Sera* and as the director and presenter of RAI's TG1, a 10-minute newscast shown on state television during typical dinner hours. His dedication to transparency in journalism and refusal to be silenced would eventually cause his distancing from the RAI network at the advent of the Berlusconi era, for remarks he made against the emerging politician.<sup>184</sup>

The Maxi Trial occupied almost the entirety of 1986; by the end of the same year Biagi had published (with the Berlusconi-owned Mondadori Publishing Company, Italy's largest) an interview-biography in which Buscetta willingly collaborated. The text borrows from both interview and biography. Biagi is listed as sole author, and he leads the reader on a journey to America to uncover the truth about Buscetta. He intervenes throughout the text to provide context, reflect upon and verify information, to provide a narrative structure to the lengthy quotes that constitute Buscetta's participation. The title of the book length interview is significant: "The Boss is Alone. Buscetta: The True Story of a True

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<sup>184</sup> Mihaela Gavrilă and Mario Morcellini, "RAI narrates Italy: Current affairs, television information and changing times," *Journal of Italian Cinema & Media Studies* 3, no. 1-2 (2015): 81-97.

Godfather”<sup>185</sup> Biagi’s position is made clear instantly. Buscetta, for his interlocutor, is still to be considered a boss, a boss abandoned by his associates and left to fend for himself. The double usage of the designation “true” introduces the conviction with which Biagi listens to and transcribes Buscetta’s words. The structure of the text allows ample space for Buscetta to elaborate on his personal and professional formation. Biagi intervenes directly in the text and furnishes readability as he reiterates many of Buscetta’s statements while prodding him to reflect on specific incidents. It reads more like a celebrity biography than a journalistic interview and is divided by thematic entries that build character through past experiences. The opening pages of the text contain a two-page spread that illustrates the hierarchical structure of *Cosa nostra*, followed by a two-page map that illustrates the locations of forty distinct Cosa nostra territories in the province of Palermo. The four chapters that follow are “Why Buscetta,” “Don Giovanni in Sicily,” “A Lifelong Pact,” and “Crimes, punishment, and hopes” followed by a “Glossary of Mafioso Language.”<sup>186</sup> Classified as a sociological text, the preliminary chart and map accompanied by the glossary function on an ethnographic level and present reader with a privileged view of a seemingly foreign society. This view, however, fails to differ from standardized mafia narratives and ultimately packages Buscetta as the last great mafioso.

The reception of the text was mixed, in the year it was published it received high accolades as the winner of the Bancarella Prize.<sup>187</sup> Alternatively, Biagi was criticized for

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<sup>185</sup> Biagi, Enzo. *Il Boss è solo: Buscetta: la vera storia di un vero padrino*. Mondadori, 1986.

<sup>186</sup> “Perche Buscetta,” “Don Giovanni in Sicilia,” “Un patto per la vita,” and “Delitti, castighi, e speranze,” “Glossario della lingua mafioso.”

<sup>187</sup> The Premio Bancarella is the prestigious annual literary prize awarded by Italian booksellers. Benelli, Giuseppe. “Storia.” Premio Bancarella. [http://www.premiobancarella.it/site/?page\\_id=580](http://www.premiobancarella.it/site/?page_id=580).

upholding Buscetta's claims and not scrutinizing him enough. Because the creation of this text is reported in interview style, my reading reveals Biagi's treatment of Buscetta as a celebrity subject, underlining the ethical dilemma that Couser says arises in co-writing celebrity biographies: "possible conflict between the writer's obligation to portray the subject as he or she would wish and the obligation to the historical record."<sup>188</sup> The text shows Buscetta offering a privileged view into his secret society, and Biagi authorizes Buscetta's rendition of history with the clout of his own name. Through an analysis of the final product, I aim to assess how Biagi, apparently fascinated by the rising star in front of him, contributes to the Buscetta discourse, and as follows the mafia discourse, in a mythicizing fashion.

From the opening paragraphs of the publication Biagi begins to bolster the myth of Buscetta. He initiates this process with the reported speech of others, initially quoting the media ("They've defined him as 'the boss of two worlds'"<sup>189</sup>), family members, and Gianni De Gennaro, the police official to whom Buscetta deposed ("a man full of dignity"<sup>190</sup>). These quotations reveal a tendency that will permeate the text, that of accentuating the positive qualities of Buscetta's character while conveniently overlooking his criminal behavior. Biagi reports on Buscetta as a powerful, alluring, and dignified individual; he absorbs and retransmits the same myth of the good *mafioso* that Buscetta continues to embody, furthering the construction of the Buscetta monument. The Buscetta product that Biagi

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<sup>188</sup> Couser, 340.

<sup>189</sup> All translations of these texts are provided by me, for lack of any of these works being published in the English market. For the curious reader, however, I've continued to provide the original quotations and reference points in footnotes. "Lo hanno definito 'boss dei due mondi'" (7).

<sup>190</sup> "un uomo pieno di dignità" (7).

helps to create affirms the devolution of *Cosa nostra* and supports the Italian governments turn to collaborators to assist in defeating the syndicate.

After Biagi summarizes the many nicknames and character traits of Buscetta, he composes his own rendition of those traits, reinforcing and furthering the mythic aspects that Buscetta began to create in his deposition. He directly refers to literary characters to build an image of Buscetta that transcends limitations of time and space, creating a sense of continuity: he is a chivalric hero, a Robin Hood (“it’s clear he has a sincere idea, either cruel or generous, of justice”).<sup>191</sup> Biagi also compares Buscetta to a Shakespearean hero and claims that “death and love have left deep marks on him. Now, he only wants to save the survivors.”<sup>192</sup> He goes on to portray Buscetta’s valiant behavior when he was suffering toothaches while under military protection. Biagi echoes and validates Buscetta’s message: his collaboration was born from a strong moral compass that inhibited him from standing idly by as the mafia fell into a state of degrade.

The resulting text relies on the same literary tradition that Buscetta perpetuated in his depositions; neither Biagi or Buscetta choose to use the term *pentito* to describe Buscetta in the interview. He is described as ‘man of honor,’ ‘boss,’ ‘capo;’ the lack of the designation *pentito* by Biagi supports the claims that Buscetta himself made, one cannot be a *pentito* if they have nothing to repent for. This designation is crucial, and contributes to seeming justification in Biagi’s text of the former and innocuous mafia that Buscetta called on so frequently. Even the cover and the title of the book point towards Buscetta’s honor: he is depicted in silhouette atop a hill with a prickly pear plant in the foreground. The

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<sup>191</sup> “ed è sicuro che ha una idea sincera, e magari anche crudele o generosa, della giustizia” (9).

<sup>192</sup> “la morte e l’amore lo hanno profondamente segnato. Adesso vuole soltanto salvare i superstiti” (9).

composition of the cover suggests that Buscetta, isolated, has a vantage point above the lowly Sicilian criminals he denounced.

In addition to the initial inklings of honor Biagi describes, he spends a great deal of the text describing the outside influences that affected Buscetta in his youth. In giving great importance to Buscetta's early mentorships from the likes of Joe Adonis, Charles Gambino, and Lucky Luciano, the 'benevolent' gangsters of yesteryear, he furthers the old/new mafia dichotomy already present in the depositions. He allows Buscetta to elaborate on the early years of what drew him to these individuals, what aspects of their characters he wanted to emulate. As Couser notes, in celebrity collaborative life writing, it is up to the collaborator to decide how much they fact check the story they put forth. Unlike a traditional biographer, who does not necessarily have an ethical obligation to his subject, Couser notes that the 'professional autobiographer' may "think of his role as analogous to that of the defense attorney, who may know more than he divulges and whose ethical obligation is to put the best possible face on his client's behavior without outright deception."<sup>193</sup> Biagi allows Buscetta to describe his relationship with Lucky Luciano as something of a mentorship. Post-interview, Biagi had total control over the shaping of the text, the editorial decisions of what to include and not to include. In his decisions to allow Buscetta to elaborate on the heroic figure of Luciano ("the most congenial figure I knew, I admired the tranquility of the man. The others were all hot-headed, full of airs"<sup>194</sup>) he supports these claims. Biagi's publication of Buscetta's claims perpetuate the parables that Buscetta

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<sup>193</sup> Couser, 341.

<sup>194</sup> "Era la figura che mi era più congeniale: ammiravo la tranquillità dell'uomo. Gli altri erano un po' degli esaltati, gonfi di arie." (144)

clings to; he claims that he met Luciano in 1943 and a friendship grew naturally from their encounter, he states “he was a myth for me. He immediately showed me kindness, and later affection, until his death. I would visit him every month.”<sup>195</sup> Biagi’s lack of critical engagement with these statements causes them to be read at face value.

The mythic aspect of Luciano pervades Buscetta’s descriptions and are attributes that he then adopts himself. He describes Luciano as having “a great magnanimity, even if he had been an assassin. But he killed to defend himself, not out of cruelty. He did not want power, instead, he abandoned it hastily. He didn’t like injustices, and he didn’t know the laws of the state, only his own.”<sup>196</sup> Buscetta clings to the idea of Luciano as a peacemaker and as a benevolent leader; in his reverence to Luciano, Buscetta refers to the higher power of the established mafia tradition to simultaneously validate and shift the attention from his own actions. Biagi, in turn, accepts these renditions without scrutiny.

Biagi’s interview allows Buscetta to describe his formation in the mafia, and outline the differences between that of the past and that of the 1970s and 80s. He describes Luciano as a messenger of peace and affirms him as a model to emulate. Buscetta describes the ingenuity of Luciano and poses him as a primary source for the mafia tradition. Buscetta internalizes the dominant mafia discourse and describes it as a positive institution; he furthers this discourse by proposing himself as a continuity to the great bosses of the past. He claims of Luciano “I didn’t see any brutality, any harshness in that

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<sup>195</sup> “Per me era un mito. Mi dimostrò subito simpatia, e poi affetto fino alla morte. Andavo ogni mese a trovarlo.” (147)

<sup>196</sup> “Una grande magnanimità, anche se era stato un assassino. Ma uccideva per difendersi, non per crudeltà. Non voleva il potere, anzi: lo aveva mollato alla svelta. Non gli piacevano le ingiustizie, e non conosceva le leggi dello Stato, ma soltanto la sua.” (151)

man, not just with me, but with everyone.”<sup>197</sup> In his assessment of his false idol, Buscetta’s alleged individual experiences are used to authenticate a mafia narrative that disregards the violence and extols mafia bosses as folkloric heroes.

Biagi’s intervention affirms Buscetta’s version of his mafia genealogy and also provides evidence for his character from the literary world. At the beginning of the chapter entitled “A lifelong pact,” Biagi provides a somewhat rambling account of his travels in Germany, Ohio, and Kentucky to interview other exceptional individuals, mostly big-name scientists, arriving at the point that these individuals had been profoundly affected by literature in their life’s work. Turning his attention back to Buscetta, he contemplates the *Beati Paoli*:

From some exemplary stories a vocation can arise. Even the Sicilian who has only held one book in his hand knows the plot and the protagonists of a popular novel: *The Blessed Paolists* [...] The ‘Blessed Paolists’ anticipated the sentiments of mafiosi [...] The young Tommaso Buscetta listens to accounts of the fearless and gallant acts of Blasco da Catiglione, and those epic stories, in some way, influence his personality.<sup>198</sup>

In fact, while Biagi’s role in the text is portrayed as minimal, allowing Buscetta to further sculpt his own monument to the self, his lack of critical engagement allows the Buscetta myth to continue and flourish. Whether Biagi’s choice to let this image of Buscetta

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197 “[...] non vedevo nessuna brutalità, nessuna asprezza con quell uomo, non solo con me, ma con tutti.” (152)

198 “Da alcune storie esemplari può nascere una vocazione. Anche il siciliano che ha avuto tra le mani un solo libro conosce la trama e i protagonist di un romanzo popolare: *I Beati Paoli*. [...] I ‘Beati Paoli’ anticipano i sentimenti dei mafiosi [...] Il giovane Tommaso Buscetta ascolta il resoconto delle geste intrepide e cavallaresche di Blasco da Castiglione, e quelle storie epiche, in qualche modo, incidono sul suo carattere.” (89-91)

emerge was conscious of subconscious, the resulting text portrays a construction of Buscetta that seems natural and authentic.

To further this point, I believe it is helpful to examine Buscetta's narration of an early experience in which American crime representatives came to Sicily to institute the Commission (or Cupola). Biagi asks Buscetta why he was included in these conversations at such a young age, Buscetta responds with no lack of modesty:

I was the rising star: clever, quick, that spoke well and had the habit of reasoning. Bonanno explained that, with the commission, homicides caused by ignorance would be avoided; every case would be examined by who would decide yes or no. I liked the idea, as did Badalamenti and Greco, and we put it into action. I didn't take part in the jury, I'm the grey eminence of *Cosa nostra*, and it's a strange fact that many are unable to explain, myself included. I didn't want a position, when it would have been very easy for me to obtain one.<sup>199</sup>

Buscetta, like the Luciano he describes, is not hungry for power; he portrays himself as concerned with the Commission inasmuch as it can maintain the innocuous goals of the underworld society. Biagi returns to this idea of Buscetta as the 'grey eminence' when they discuss why Buscetta never addressed the '3<sup>rd</sup> level' of mafia affairs. When Buscetta claims to know at least forty or fifty citizens above suspicion who maintained contact with the secret society, Biagi again asks Buscetta why he was able to hold so much influence in spite of his lack of official position in the mob. Biagi's insistence, while perhaps intended to penetrate cracks in Buscetta's narrative has the opposite effect: it allows Buscetta to rearticulate his exceptional nature and further the image he creates of himself. When asked

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<sup>199</sup> "Io ero l'astro che nasceva, furbo, svelto, che sapeva parlare un poco, e aveva l'abitudine di ragionare. Bonanno spiegò che con la commissione si evitavano gli omicidi provocati dall'ignoranza; ogni caso veniva esaminato da che decideva per il sì o per il no. L'idea piaceva a me, a Badalamenti e a Greco, e l'abbiamo messo in pratica. Io non ho fatto parte del giurì; io sono l'eminenza grigia di Cosa Nostra, ed è un fatto molto strano, che molti non riescono a spiegarsi, e io neppure. Non volevo cariche, quando era molto facile per me ottenerle." (154)



explicitly how he was able to know so much without having a position of command, Buscetta's response portrays him as a mystical hero: "I was liked by who had it [power]... for my behavior and the seriousness they recognized in me. And, maybe, I insist, I had a certain edge over the others."<sup>200</sup>

According to Buscetta, his exceptional character caused him at times to be seen as an annoyance to his associates, especially in light of his collaboration. When addressing why this might be, he objectively claims: "Buscetta is just, Buscetta is strong, Buscetta fears no one, Buscetta is not afraid of any one."<sup>201</sup> Speaking of himself in the third person, he paradoxically provides objective claims while speaking of a fully subjective conception of his own identity. His self-assurance is deeply linked to his sense of morality. He sees himself as a wise man and a peacemaker who played the important role of reminding his colleagues, without fear, of their duties as men of honor. This heroism is typical in literary Mafiosi as well; one must only think of Sciascia's Don Mariano Arena categorizing himself as a man and his division of humanity into five categories to understand the moral concerns of a mafioso prototype. Buscetta as celebrity and professional lives up to expectations of what audiences had known mafiosi to be, and his personal experiences are at the service of this narrative of the honorable mafioso. A level terrain between celebrity and literary construction is evident in the usage of similar thematic inventory of honor, morality, and self-sacrifice.

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<sup>200</sup> "Riscuotevo simpatia presso chi l'aveva, da chi contava. Il mio comportamento, la serietà che mi riconoscevano. E, forse, insisto, una marcia in più." (176)

<sup>201</sup> "Buscetta è giusto, Buscetta è forte, Buscetta non teme nessuno, Buscetta non ha paura di nessuno." (185)

Buscetta frequently refers to his own morality, but also describes his inklings of doubts on the wholesomeness of the organization when he speaks of his time in prison. He tells the story of the mid 1970s prison revolt he was credited with ending while detained in Palermo's notorious Ucciardone.<sup>202</sup> Buscetta describes himself as a 'socialist' that uses his position of power to better conditions for all; he portrays himself as a protectorate of the underdog and a hero that anticipates others needs before they are aware of them. By claiming to be 'socialist' in essence, Buscetta grasps onto a political and ideological higher authority to reinforce his benevolent image.

Buscetta's self-proclaimed hegemony mirrors the literary model; his form of power rivals and trumps the mandate of the state precisely because he has the support of the populace. In response to the revolt he stopped "with one word"<sup>203</sup> he describes the power he exercised and the benevolence of his actions:

I don't believe I had authority, but altruism, friendship. The incarcerated are selfish. That's something I'm not, even today. This gift was greatly appreciated. From when I entered to when I left, there were no stabbings, no one fell down the stairs, as they say in the official reports when an inmate is all beat up.<sup>204</sup>

Buscetta's altruism is also what he describes as having attracted to him to the mafia initially. Biagi, who sustains Buscetta's belief in the division between old and new mafia

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<sup>202</sup> The Ucciardone hosted hundreds of mafiosi throughout the 20th century and was dubbed "Grand Hotel Ucciardone" for the frequency with which it was visited and the reported luxuries (champagne and caviar) to which the prisoners had access. John Dickie, "The capital of the anti-mafia" in *Mafia Republic: Italy's Criminal Curse. Cosa Nostra, 'Ndrangheta and Camorra from 1946 to the Present* (Hachette, UK, 2013).

<sup>203</sup> "con una parola" (195).

<sup>204</sup> "Non credo che avevo dell'autorità, ma dell'altruismo, dell'amicizia. Il carcerato è egoista. Io non lo sono neanche oggi. Questa dote veniva molto apprezzata. Da quando sono entrato e uscito non c'è stata una coltellata, nessuno è caduto dalle scale, come dicono nei rapporti quando un detenuto è tutto pesto." (195).

asks him which of the fallen moral values he most believes in. Buscetta's response is " [...]  
altruism. I liked the mafia when it was useful. I distributed hundreds of jobs in Palermo."<sup>205</sup>

This mythic aspect of a kind and altruistic mafioso is one Biagi allows Buscetta to perpetuate through his narration of the most dramatic experiences of his eventual collaboration. Biagi transcribes extremely personal documents that put Buscetta's values into sharper focus. These documents include the suicide letter he wrote to Cristina, and entries from his journal from just weeks after beginning his collaboration. Biagi's choice to include these documents is important as it bolsters a sense of narrative truth by citing supporting documents. The choice, however, is vexing: the letters and journal entries are, like autobiography itself, expressions of Buscetta's subjective experience and yet are presented as objective data. Many critics of both biography and autobiography discuss the implications of using letters and diaries in life narratives, Ken Plummer suggests that these 'life documents' should be treated carefully as they are not as transparent as one might think.<sup>206</sup> In the case of Biagi's text, there are no acknowledgments of any of the risks of these documents: rather, they are rather presented, if we are to return to Couser's metaphor of the defense attorney, as supporting evidence to build Buscetta's character.

Buscetta's 1984 suicide letter, unsurprisingly, is amongst the most emotional of his declarations, and should hence be treated with greater scrutiny. Buscetta writes:

Now I am certain that our children can move forward without distressing traumas;  
and I will no longer be the cumbersome shadow, their eternally absent father [...]

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<sup>205</sup> "[...]nell'altruismo. Mi piaceva la mafia quando era utile. Ho distribuito a Palermo centinaia di impieghi." (178)

<sup>206</sup> The 'Life Documents' Plummer theorizes are not limited merely to letters and diaries, but also can include home videos, photographs, or any object that can be used in the reconstruction of an individual life narrative. Ken Plummer, "Accessories to a Life Story: From Written Diaries to Video Diaries" in John Goodwin, ed., *SAGE Biographical Research*. (London: Sage, 2012).

you will still suffer, but I can assure you it will be the last time [...] Teach the boys that their father should not be vindicated in any way. What a paradoxical destiny: I'm abandoning you because I love you, I'm killing myself so that you can live. I have the satisfaction of arriving at rock bottom with a gesture of love, I feel as I'm finishing my life well, leaving you something that will last forever.<sup>207</sup>

Biagi intervenes in the text to describe Buscetta's failed suicide attempt and of his eventual extradition. From an extremely subjective letter in which Buscetta describes his choice, Biagi extracts only the objective historical record. Biagi describes the flight to Italy in which Buscetta, still in intensive medical condition, declares his intentions to collaborate to Gianni de Gennaro. In this instance he refers to Buscetta as a literary character, stating that "there will be other chapters in his tormented novel,"<sup>208</sup> again revealing a Biagi that relies on literary undertones to compose the Buscetta image.

In addition to including Buscetta's letter to his wife, Biagi also includes a journal entry in which reflects intensely on what led him to arrive to his massive decision to collaborate. It is here, more than anywhere else, that Buscetta displays a sense of regret. The regret, however, is not for his years of mafia participation, but for betraying omertà. He is cognizant of the insults that will be leveled at him but justifies his choice as that of a true mafioso. Ever clinging to his sense of altruism, Buscetta insists on the love that inspires him to 'betray' the mafia, which he ultimately sees as having betrayed him. On July 28, 1985, he writes:

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<sup>207</sup> "Ora sono certo che i nostri figli potranno tirare avanti senza penosi traumi; e io non sarò più l'ombra ingombrante, il padre eterno assente [...] soffrirete ancora, ma vi posso assicurare che sarà l'ultima volta. [...] Insegna ai maschietti che il loro padre non deve essere vendicato in alcun modo. Che destino paradossale: vi abbandono perché vi amo, m'ammazzi perché possiate vivere. Ho la soddisfazione di arrivare in fondo con un gesto d'amore, mi sento come se finesse bene la mia vita, lasciandovi qualcosa che durerà per sempre." (76-78)

<sup>208</sup> "Ci saranno altri capitoli nel suo tormentato romanzo." (78)

For love I gave up everything, including my honor, which I care for immensely, and was my one and only source of pride. For me there is no excuse: I am a worm, and as such I do not deserve justifications. The journalistic inventions about me were never, even if distorted, will never be as bad as I deserve. If I decided to become the worst person I know, it is because I loved and I love. I knew I didn't have another choice.<sup>209</sup>

Melodramatically, Buscetta loses his honor and his dignity through breaking omertà but redeems himself by portraying it as a positive act, a sacrifice in the name of love. Despite his self-described conviction of doing the right thing, the imagery he associates with his 'betrayal' continue the discourse of the lowly *infame* as an enemy to the greater good protected by the mafia.

It would be better if I were killed by an enemy, rather than as a traitor. Today I live a life that no longer belongs to me. Every day, every evening, every minute, I live in shame, alienating myself from everything [...] I had to do something that brought good to my loved ones, at the cost of my dignity. I had to pay a price, the highest price.<sup>210</sup>

The collaborative gesture is figured as a continuation of the *mafioso* discourse of self-sacrifice that had been articulated through decades of literature in which *mafiosi* served as folkloric heroes providing for the populace whilst ignoring their personal fate. In providing the gift of his collaboration, Buscetta no longer recognizes himself; he fails (as of yet) to realize, that the sacrifice he performs is exactly what the great mafioso that he paints himself to be would do.

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<sup>209</sup> "Per amore ho rinunciato a tutto, anche al mio onore, a cui tenevo tanto, ed era il mio unico e solo orgoglio. Per me non esistono discolpe: sono un verme, e come tale non merito giustificazioni. Le invenzioni giornalistiche sul mio conto non sono mai state, pur se distorte, tanto cattive quanto io meriti. Se ho deciso di diventare il peggiore di tutta la gente che conosco, è perché io amavo e amo. Sapevo di non avere altra scelta[...]" (182)

<sup>210</sup> "Giusto sarebbe stato morire ucciso dal nemico, piuttosto che come un traditore. Oggi subisco una vita che non mi appartiene più. Ogni giorno, ogni sera, ogni minute vivo la mia vergogna, estraniandomi da tutto. [...] Dovevo fare qualcosa che portasse del bene ai miei cari a costo della mia dignità. Dovevo pagare un prezzo, il prezzo più alto," 183.

A month later, however, Buscetta's attempt to come to terms with his decision still concerns him. He ultimately rules it as the necessary and right choice, the only method to bring justice to an organization that had become unjust. He reminds his interlocutor, and ultimately the reader, of the weight of his sacrifice as an ultimate redemption:

My revolt against the mafia, that in my eyes had become a monstrous criminal machine, should not be forgotten [...] Even if innocent, I would have accepted any crimes I was charged with; I would have been able to tolerate the impossible, if the gang had not forgotten our vow. The first rule was: help the weak. They trampled it.  
211

This recurring dichotomy between the old, honorable mafia and the new, blood thirsty gang of Totò Riina allows Buscetta to displace the accusations against him. Instead of dwelling on the shame of being viewed as a traitor, he uses it as a distinguishing factor that helps him to maintain his identity as the 'true Godfather' of the book's title. Again, through the employment of the autobiographical act, Buscetta is able to direct the discourse that surrounds him; Biagi supports this discourse and packages it for public consumption. He behaves, as typical of many *celebrity* ghostwriters and co-autobiographers, as a defense attorney, prodding Buscetta to present his *own* evidence of his remarkable character while neglecting to present what could be seen as negative.

*Addio Cosa nostra*

*I segreti della mafia nella confessione di Tommaso Buscetta*, Pino Arlacchi (1994).

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211 "...Non va dimenticata la mia rivolta contro la mafia, diventata ai miei occhi una mostruosa macchina criminale. [...] Anche se innocente, avrei accettato tutte le colpe addebitateme, sarei stato capace di soffrire l'impossibile, se la masnada non avesse dimenticato il nostro giuramento. La prima regola diceva: aiutare il debole. L'hanno calpestata," 184.

Shortly following the 1992 deaths of Falcone and Borsellino, Pino Arlacchi, a sociologist noted for his studies on the mafia, entered into contact with Tommaso Buscetta. Like with Biagi, the results of their conversations would be publicized thereafter in an attempt to understand Buscetta, the mafia, and their historical, cultural and political significance. While Biagi was faithful to the interview structure to guide his text, Arlacchi, on the other hand, chooses a first-person point-of-view in constructing what reads, more than the other texts analyzed in this chapter, as a traditional autobiography. The choice of the author is certainly unusual, despite having used this technique in the 'autobiography' of the *pentito* Antonio Calderone in the 1992 Rizzoli publication *Gli uomini del disonore* (*The Men of Dishonor*). Arlacchi, through absorbing the voice of Buscetta, confers the same credibility that he receives onto the object of his inquiry.

Pino Arlacchi, had long been renowned for his research on various mafias by the time he wrote *Addio Cosa Nostra*. In his previous publications he had worked under the common understanding that the mafia consisted in crime families that, despite sharing similar goals and sometimes working together, were not a unified entity. This view is directly in conflict with the hierarchical mafia with a governing body that emerged with the 'Buscetta Theorem'. In the introduction to the text, Arlacchi discusses his resistance to accept the new model, despite having been cued into it by none other than judge Falcone.<sup>212</sup> As he states, it is not until his interviews with Calderone that he begins to realize the ontological and scientific value of the *pentiti* in understanding the complexity of the nature of the organized sect. In *Gli Uomini del Disonore*, a text that shares many

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<sup>212</sup> Arlacchi, VIII.

similarities with *Addio Cosa Nostra* in terms of a mythicized mafia, Calderone is treated in the same manner, bringing forth parallel discourses of honor and sacrifice. Furthermore, Arlacchi describes his previous academic convictions of having been obstructed by his own 'intellectual superbia'. In framing Buscetta in this manner, Arlacchi reveals his conviction in the truth of Buscetta; his incredulity had been overturned by the consistency and depth of the mafioso's depositions. In fact, the full title of the book, *Addio Cosa Nostra: I segreti della mafia nella confessione di Tommaso Buscetta (Goodbye Cosa Nostra: The Secrets of the Mafia in the Confession of Tommaso Buscetta)* mimics those of celebrity autobiographies in which readers are allegedly offered an exclusive look at a world to which they do not usually have access.

This text functions similarly to that of Biagi in its glorifying portrayal of Buscetta, but due to the historical moment in which it was published, the political stakes have been raised. The death of Falcone, in fact, is credited in the text as marking a "third phase" of Buscetta's life: for the first time he agrees to speak about what he knows about the mafia's connections with Italian politics. Arlacchi speaks of Buscetta's dedication to the law after his collaboration, speaking of a shared goal between the mafioso and the judge. Buscetta has become starkly anti-mafia in his intentions, he is no longer required in any way to collaborate. Arlacchi states the reasoning for Buscetta's return to Italy as such:

*I had settled the score with Italian justice and I hadn't had any interest in reopening the war, of again presenting myself on the front line. But the mere memory of Giovanni Falcone's ironic smile was enough to make my heart beat with indignation.*<sup>213</sup>

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<sup>213</sup> "Avevo chiuso le mie pendenze con la giustizia italiana e non avrei avuto alcun interesse a riaprire la guerra, a presentarmi di nuovo in prima linea. Ma il solo ricordo del sorriso ironico di Giovanni Falcone era sufficiente a farmi battere il cuore per l'indignazione," 264.



The 1992 collaboration, in Arlacchi's text, is presented as a gift in the memory of Falcone. Buscetta, from his home in hiding in the US, is described as being compelled to collaborate by his belief in the cause. The new collaboration leads Arlacchi to reflect on the changes in the justice system and the press since 1984. The text acts as a recovery of the figure of Buscetta in his semantic role of a signifier of *pentitismo*.

While Arlacchi, a sociologist, accuses the press for their lack of accuracy, he essentially performs the same role as Biagi in creating a subjective narration that owes little debt to a rigid scientific method. Adding to the celebrity figure, Arlacchi relies on biographical data and a pre-established vision of Buscetta as 'true mafioso.' Despite his own participation in the proliferation of narratives, he declares a great disappointment in the "chaos" surrounding the investigations and the press. He narrates that at times, the statements of the *pentiti* ended up in the hands of the public before they were corroborated, or before the collaborators were in State protection. The Buscetta of Arlacchi's text is more than anti-mafioso; he becomes both activist and advisor. The Buscetta that Arlacchi portrays advises the Italians to honor the *pentiti*, to scrupulously examine their testimonies, and to punish the criminals as severely as they can. He responds to the claims brought by the Prime Minister Giulio Andreotti against him, that he had come back to Italy to "upset the political equilibrium" and that the *pentiti* were "manipulated" by brushing them off as ridiculous. He also describes what he sees as *Cosa nostra's* campaign against the *pentiti* (citing Toto Riina's first public declaration after his arrest), claiming that as the mafia sees them as a prime threat, the State would be wise to realize their value as well.

In all of the historical texts I have consulted, Buscetta is credited (at times directly, others obliquely) with bringing about a change for a society of legality. His confessions were an integral part of the *Primavera Palermitana*, the brief period in which the city of Palermo, both on a judicial and social level seemed to awaken from a long winter of either denying or being confounded by organized crime, and in which it employed all forces to create an anti-mafia culture in the Sicilian capital.<sup>214</sup> Despite this general consensus among historians, the role of Buscetta was never unproblematic; on the heels of Biagi's publication, the judges that worked with *pentito* confessions were already put in the public spotlight with Leonardo Sciascia's by now infamous rant against "I professionisti dell'antimafia."<sup>215</sup> The scathing commentary, published in the *Corriere della sera* during the Maxi Trial, was read by many as an attack on Borsellino and Falcone, accused of manipulating *mafiosi* to favor the advancement of their own careers. Sciascia prefaced many of the issues that would arise with the increasing quantity of *pentiti* that collaborated with the Italian state; while Sciascia's work did not directly attack Arlacchi's book (it was not yet published), it points to an intellectual distrust in possible motivations of *pentitismo*. These issues pointed at the lack of trust towards the pentito figure, whose actions were often portrayed as self-serving attempts to save himself through his maneuvering of judges trying to make earnest breakthroughs in their own work. In the judiciary arena, the *pentiti* were for the first time granted protection under Italian law 203 of 1991, which extended the protection afforded Italian terrorists in the 1970s to cover mafia collaborators as well.

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<sup>214</sup> For an analysis of the socio-political developments regarding the struggle between mafia and anti-mafia on a cultural and institutional level, see the introduction to Jane and Peter T. Schneider. *Reversible destiny: Mafia, antimafia, and the struggle for Palermo*. Univ of California Press, 2003.

<sup>215</sup> Leonardo Sciascia, "I professionisti dell'antimafia," *Corriere della Sera* (January 10, 1987).

Simultaneously, Silvio Berlusconi was emerging in the Italian political scene and had made it his personal mission to bring light to the pentito phenomenon, fiercely attacking it by 1994 in his election campaign. One of the strongest claims of Berlusconi was against the so-called “dichiarazioni a rate,” ‘declarations in installments’ that he claimed *pentiti* felt obliged to make to maintain their own protection, further calling into question whether these claims were true.<sup>216</sup> Berlusconi’s railing against pentitismo during his campaign reveals firstly, that pentitismo was still being debated in the public sphere and secondly, that perhaps further revelations by the *pentiti* would perhaps represent a danger to the the new ruling class—even after the successes of the Maxi Trial and the *Mani Pulite* campaign.

With the political context in mind, the stakes are raised when Arlacchi, a scholar of the anti-mafia, intervenes in defense of Italy’s first pentito. He is not only writing against the grain of the national context, but he is doing so in a time in which his words would surely come under deep scrutiny. Of particular interest in the understanding of this choice is the preface. While the text is presented as genuine and definitive, Arlacchi does remind the reader that the text presented is not a verbatim account but rather:

an exposition of the ideas, the experience, and the salient facts of one of the biggest contemporary mafiosos, as they are presented in the course of a confrontation with the questions, the inclinations, and the idiosyncrasies of a scholar of the mafia phenomenon.<sup>217</sup>

The warning is elaborated on as the author states:

We are quite far, this time as well, from the ingenuous illusion of explaining once and for all ‘what the mafia really is’ through the individual story, and according to an expressive formula that reflects the ‘true’ linguistic and communicative register of a

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<sup>216</sup> Riccardo Luna, “Basta con i pentiti...” *La Repubblica* (March 26, 1994).

<sup>217</sup> “Si tratta dell’esposizione delle idee, delle esperienze e dei fatti salienti dell’esistenza di uno dei maggiori mafiosi contemporanei, così come essi sono emersi nel corso di un confronto con le domande, le curiosità, le inclinazioni e le idiosincrasie di uno studioso del fenomeno mafioso.” (XI)

man of honor. The choice of the first person instead of the third is only a way to confer immediacy to the story.<sup>218</sup>

In spite of this disclaimer, the choice of the first person goes far beyond merely conferring immediacy on the story. Arlacchi disappears from the text and what follows is the result of his study of the depositions and the discussions he had had with Buscetta. His rigorous study of Buscetta's life story allow him to seamlessly embody the guise of the mafioso. One must consciously remind themselves that the account they are reading is steeped in the traditions of two seemingly exclusive genres: those of biography and fiction.

The elements of biography and fiction that pervade Arlacchi's first person biography of Buscetta are present in Biagi's rendition as well. Themes of honor, self-sacrifice, and an idealized old mafia reappear. In Arlacchi's rendition, Buscetta is further monumentalized: his personal story is used to give importance to the wealth of knowledge possessed by the first *pentito* and highlight the usefulness of the *pentiti* in coming to understand, and ultimately defeat, the uniquely Sicilian form of organized crime. Buscetta, in this role, again extols the past mafia and condemns the present; the monument offered for public consumption here is one of a noteworthy *pentito*, a patrimony for the anti-mafia and a model to be emulated. Returning to think of Buscetta's previous creation of the 'monument of the self,' in the depositions, and his own claims that he collaborated to ensure a better future (and encourages others to do the same), Arlacchi absorbs this narrative and reproduces it. As a monument, Buscetta serves to signify a turning point, a watershed

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<sup>218</sup> "Siamo quindi ben lontani, anche questa volta, dall'ingenua illusione di spiegare una volta per tutte 'che cos'è veramente la mafia' attraverso una storia personale e secondo una formula espressiva che rifletta il 'vero' registro linguistico e comunicativo di un uomo d'onore. La scelta della prima persona invece della terza è solo un modo per conferire immediatezza al racconto." (XI-XII)

moment in Italian history where, through his collaboration, a new age of legality is celebrated.

From the first line of the life narrative, the author adopts the voice of Buscetta in a definitive manner with one-sentence paragraph “*I am not a pentito.*”<sup>219</sup> The text opens with a diatribe on the negative connotations of the term; Arlacchi writes “*di cosa mi sarei pentito?*” and states that with his collaboration he neither expected nor asked for anyone’s forgiveness. The staunch attitude towards the title *pentito* delves into Buscetta’s psychology and addresses the cultural connotations that have been piled on the term by the time of publication in 1994. He claims, like in the initial depositions, that he is not a spy. He is not an informant. He, again, is a man that believes in the validity of *his* mafia, and is led to his collaboration by disillusionment and disgust with the modern mafia of the Corleonesi. The approach of Arlacchi to completely absorb the voice and provide a succinct history of the mafia according to Buscetta could be indicative of an inherent trust of Arlacchi in Buscetta’s narrative. Returning to his introductory comments of his own intellectual superbia in relation to the pentiti, his return to this methodology in treating Buscetta should be read as an act of trust between author and subject, a token of the implied reliability of both.

In the following chapters, Arlacchi mixes the personal aspects of Buscetta’s story with the political. Much of the text reads as the worldwide (mis)adventures of an exceptional individual, with chapter titles like “Latin America, First Stage 1949-1951,” “Escape to Mexico,” “Canada, New York, and the American *Cosa nostra*,” “Brazil and

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<sup>219</sup> In my analysis of this text, I will *italicize* quotations as a reminder to the reader that the first-person voice is a *construction* of Arlacchi and should not be confused with the ‘real’ voice of Buscetta.

Cristina,” “Prison,” “Again in Brazil.” The majority of the chapter titles, however, make references to Buscetta’s experiences in the mafia, and present him as much an expert on the mafia as he was on his own life. The chapter titles present a Buscetta with larger than life acquaintances: Salvatore Giuliano, Lucky Luciano, and Joe Bonanno. Like in Biagi’s text, Arlacchi does not engage with discrepancies in Buscetta’s visions of these criminals, but lets the visions and memories remain uncontested, rendering clearer the allegorical family tree that establishes Buscetta’s honor. The ‘family tree’ of Arlacchi’s account serves a similar semantic role as to that in Biagi’s account, they parallel each other in portraying a genealogy of honor that is steeped in the Buscetta figure.

Other individuals nominated in the chapter titles present Buscetta as a formidable expert on the links between mafia and politics- a role he had previously shied away from. Arlacchi’s inclusion of information on this ‘3<sup>rd</sup> level’ of mafia connections foster a vision of Buscetta as omniscient. In his previous statements, Buscetta had always been hesitant to address political connections to *Cosa nostra* because he saw the corruption as so entrenched that the denials of their veracity would put his credibility at risk for other matters as well. Arlacchi repeats this narrative as well, and justifies it as a way to ‘protect’ judge Falcone. Here, after the death of Falcone and the widespread recognition of political corruption in light of the *Mani Pulite* campaign, Arlacchi gives Buscetta credit for already knowing many of the twisted affairs that would have shamed the Republic. Again, the chapter titles reveal an omniscient mafioso with an impressive depth of knowledge. Mentions of Enrico Mattei, Mauro de Mauro, Aldo Moro, Carlo Alberto Dalla Chiesa, and Giulio Andreotti link the mafioso to the “excellent cadavers” and intrigues of Italy’s First

Republic. Well-known figures attest to a sense of historical truth and context that fortify Arlacchi's writing, camouflaging his own hand in restructuring the Buscetta narrative.

The most significant rendering of Buscetta that Arlacchi performs is linked to his personal experiences; again, the themes of honor, dignity, and respect guide my textual analysis. In this first-person biography, Arlacchi focuses on the importance of Buscetta's Sicilian roots to justify a natural progression into criminality. The focus on formative experiences through biographical reveal an Arlacchi that returns to his role of sociologist, as in the fourth chapter "I Was Born in Palermo," when the city is posed as indispensable for Buscetta's apprenticeship in crime. The chapter delves into the family history and early years in Buscetta's life- Arlacchi describes his youth as a young boy amongst adults; he describes being the youngest of 17 children, 6 of which were already deceased by the time he was born. He describes the severe character of his father, and how much he respected him. He describes his family as being well-off financially, until the outbreak of WWII. In the descriptions of the German occupation, Arlacchi links Buscetta's early crime experiences to his morality:

*Robbing from the Germans exalted me. I hated them deeply because I saw them as owners of my city, of my land... I suffered seeing our dignity trampled on by these cruel and ruthless invaders. The Germans had fun prodding at our jealousy,—we had almost nothing to eat—eating butter and marmalade in front of us.<sup>220</sup>*

His early inklings of criminal behavior, stealing provisions to bring home to his family in a time of national crisis, is justified as a moral resistance to an unjust ruler. These moments

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<sup>220</sup> "Rubare ai tedeschi mi esaltava. Li odiavo profondamente perché li vedevo padroni della mia città, della mia terra. [...] soffrivo nel vedere capestata la nostra dignità da questi invasori crudeli e spietati. I tedeschi si divertivano a eccitare la nostra invidia—non avevamo quasi niente da mangiare—mettendosi a mangiare burro e marmellata di fronte a noi." Arlacchi, 31-32.

in Buscetta's youth are described as having made him mature faster and having opened his world to that of *Cosa nostra*. The story of Buscetta participating in the Italian resistance at Naples is again used as an explicit expression of his righteousness and as a definitive factor in his recruitment to an association impressed by his serious behavior. Furthermore, his meetings with 'men of honor' left in him "*an intense desire to belong to that enchanted world.*"<sup>221</sup>

As Arlacchi describes his eventual entrance into that world, the morality of Buscetta is again the focal point. Before being brought to the initiation, a period of observance is described, in which a young Buscetta is investigated to determine whether he had any family members who were compromised in any way. The investigation included establishing the family's honor in that no one worked for the police, no one had been betrayed or otherwise offended in their honor. Additionally, they wanted to make sure no one in his family had been offended by a mafioso, and that no one had ever "*turned to the justice of the State during disagreements or complaints.*"<sup>222</sup> This insistence on honor and the opposition between the State's justice and Mafia justice is a recurring theme; Arlacchi further monumentalizes the myth of the honorable sect and, as follows, of Buscetta within that world.

The description of Buscetta's new mafia 'family' is full of nostalgia for an extinct mafia. Again, the character of Gaetano Filippone, *capo* of the Porta Nuova family, is shown to be a modest man whom Buscetta respected. He is described as having "never gotten

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<sup>221</sup> "un intenso desiderio di appartenere a quel mondo incantato." Arlacchi, 34.

<sup>222</sup> Arlacchi, 45.



rich”<sup>223</sup> and his simplicity is demonstrated by his backyard garden and his use of public transport. Arlacchi/Buscetta here launches into a description of *Cosa nostra* at the time, explaining that being part of the group did not necessarily bring economic advantages, but a sense of belonging to a group of ‘honorable’ men that served as a support network.

The division between the old and the new mafias here is also presented in its economic implications; Arlacchi/Buscetta describes *Cosa nostra* before 1970 as modest and, apart from cigarette contraband, not involving vast ranks of *mafiosi*. The time period is described as such: “*there was no drug trafficking, there were no public contracts, scams and armed robberies in the big style that took hold after 1970.*”<sup>224</sup> The idea of the mafia as a custodian of public welfare is brought to the forefront in the description of the ‘guardianship’ of the Porta Nuova family. Arlacchi/Buscetta describes the family’s role in guarding the factory that produced the sewage covers for the city of Palermo. Certainly not glorious work, but the communal aspect of the sect is amplified as the narrator describes how Gaetano Filippone would send his own son to sleep at the site. The loss of an early romanticized mafia is what pushes Buscetta to abandon it.

This theme of Buscetta as an innocent bystander that could not accept the degradation of his honorable society is exposed in Arlacchi’s work as well. In the chapter entitled “A Map of *Cosa Nostra* at the Beginning of the 80s,” the narration focuses on these changes. Upon Buscetta’s abandonment of the semi-liberty that he had received during his incarceration in Turin, he returned to a Palermo which he recognized as deeply changed,

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<sup>223</sup> “un uomo di cui ho ammirato molto la condotta, un mafioso che non si è mai arricchito,” 36.

<sup>224</sup> “Non c’era il traffico della droga, non c’erano gli appalti pubblici, le truffe e le rapine in grande stile che hanno preso piede dopo il 1970,” 37.

the narration focuses on the advent of drug trafficking by *Cosa nostra*, an affair to which Buscetta always claimed to be extraneous. The extent of the drug trade had made rich men of the bosses and the mafia soldiers alike, the Commission seemed to be useless or unwilling to intervene. Arlacchi/Buscetta narrates the change as such:

*My opinions on the dangers that drugs represented for the future of all of us mafiosi did not convince anyone. The long incarceration that I had served made me appear as a witness to a lost world. In certain moments I felt like the general of a missing army, wearing a patched up uniform with rusted stars, happening upon a hypocrite, greedy, and sloppy soldiery. And above all, stupid, unaware, because they were seated atop a volcano that would shortly bury them.*<sup>225</sup>

This description of Buscetta portrays him as being at a crossroads between two worlds. His decision to return to Brazil in search of peace and tranquility is again expressed in a Roman meeting with Pippo Calò, the new head of the Porta Nuova family. Buscetta/Arlacchi describe this meeting as a confrontation between the past and the present, in which Buscetta refuses to adapt himself to the changing landscape of *Cosa nostra*.

Arlacchi/Buscetta narrates: “there’s no room for me. I see you’re all rich here”. In the conversation, Calò allegedly implores Buscetta to stay in Italy, and informs him it would be extremely simple to become involved in the booming international drug trade. Arlacchi narrates Buscetta surprised by the vast changes he sees in Calò:

*During my stay in Rome I realized how much Cosa Nostra had changed in terms of power. Political power, economic power, power from the relationships with the top representatives of the State. A character like Calò, who I had left as a clerk in a fabric*

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<sup>225</sup> “Ma le mie opinioni sul pericolo che la droga costituiva per il futuro di tutti noi mafiosi non convinceva nessuno. La lunga carcerazione che avevo subito mi faceva apparire come il testimone di un mondo ormai tramontato. In certi momenti mi sentivo come il generale di un esercito scomparso, con la divisa rattoppata e le stellette arrugginite, capitato in mezzo a una soldataglia ipocrita, avida e trasandata. E soprattutto stupida, incosciente, perché seduta a bivaccare sopra un vulcano che l’avrebbe sepolta di lì a poco,” 222.

*shop in Palermo, now lived the life of a gentleman, of a well-off person that doesn't need to work and is revered by all...*<sup>226</sup>

In this portrayal of the two mafias, a system of binaries is revealed in which Buscetta is posed at a crossroads. The past, represented by the humility and honor and the figure of Gaetano Filippone, contends against the contemporary mafia represented by drugs, greed, Pippo Calò and his new friends, the Corleonesi.<sup>227</sup> The constitution of these divisions, be they true or not, is extremely important because it allows Buscetta to denounce the (modern) mafia without acknowledging his own misdoings of the past. Arlacchi engages with this narrative that Buscetta already began to construct in his depositions and in his interview with Biagi and uses the personal experiences of Buscetta to create an emotional narrative of a man who made the ultimate sacrifice by obeying his moral compass.

Buscetta's sacrifice comes into focus in the last chapters ("The Unhappy Return," "The Turning Point," and "Epilogue"<sup>228</sup>) as Arlacchi iterates the changes that resulted from the collaboration. He narrates that Buscetta, before deciding to collaborate, had been the cause of nine family members' deaths, and was considered the "*origin of [their] eternal unhappiness*" for over 60 individuals. He, again, narrates Buscetta's attempted suicide; describing it (as Buscetta did in Biagi's text) as an act of love. When the suicide fails, Arlacchi describes it as an act of providence. The chapter entitled "The Turning Point" begins as follows:

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<sup>226</sup> "Durante il mio soggiorno a Roma mi resi conto di quanto Cosa Nostra fosse cambiata in termini di potenza. Potenza politica, potenza del denaro, potenza delle relazioni con i vertici dello Stato. Un personaggio come Calò, che avevo lasciato da commesso di un negozio di tessuti a Palermo, adesso faceva la vita da gentiluomo, della persona agiata che non ha bisogno di lavorare e viene rispettato da tutti." (225).

<sup>227</sup> I will have further opportunity to explore the Buscetta/Calò relationship in Chapter 3 as it pertains to courtroom theatrics at the Maxi Trial.

<sup>228</sup> "Il ritorno infelice," "La svolta," "Epilogo."

*Each one of us has just one destiny. Mine did not foresee a death as a suicide mafioso, but had reserved for me the surprise of being the first mafioso that decides to collaborate with the State. My body had the best over the poison.*<sup>229</sup>

This portrayal of Buscetta's 'destiny' to become a collaborator further aggrandizes the act, endowing it with a sense of significance that allows the narrator to overcome the sense of shame in collaborating. Arlacchi/Buscetta again delve into the relationship between Buscetta and Falcone and credit Falcone with making Buscetta feel that he was doing the right thing.

Arlacchi/Buscetta makes a direct reference to the role of a 1949 mafia film, *In nome della legge* (Pietro Germi), that supports Buscetta's vision of his collaboration. The narrator briefly describes the plot of the film and how the young prefect in the film "*manages to bend, after a difficult struggle, the law of the mafia to the law of the State.*"<sup>230</sup> Falcone is compared to the young prefect who represents "*the calmness, the tranquil strength of justice*"<sup>231</sup> that convinces Buscetta, figured as Turi Passalacqua, the mafioso who cedes to the prefect when he realizes his group of bandits is causing the ruin of the town. Arlacchi/Buscetta describe a young Buscetta as being criticized for his approval of the film thirty years before, claiming that the other mafiosi saw the behavior of Passalacqua as being "*unworthy of a man of honor.*"<sup>232</sup>

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<sup>229</sup> "Ognuno di noi ha un solo destino. Il mio non prevedeva la morte da mafioso suicida, ma mi aveva riservato la sorpresa di essere il primo mafioso che decide di collaborare con lo Stato. La mia fibra ebbe la meglio sul veleno." (250)

<sup>230</sup> "Il protagonista era un giovane pretore che riusciva a piegare, dopo una lotta difficile, la legge della mafia a quella dello Stato." (251)

<sup>231</sup> "Era la calma, la forza tranquilla della giustizia che lui rappresentava [...]" (251)

<sup>232</sup> "Secondo loro, il comportamento di Passalacqua era indegno di un uomo d'onore." (215)

This film has been noted by the critics Vittorio Albano, and more recently Dana Renga, for a false portrayal of the mafia, critiqued for buying into the myth of the mafia as a grassroots protection scheme and critiqued for its ambiguous ending. Was Passalacqua really ceding to the prefect, or was it, rather, that he was paving the road for an illicit friendship between the two 'laws'? In Arlacchi's text, the former reading is preferred as Buscetta is depicted as embodying the chapter title's 'turning point' between a past of *omertà* and a future in which the State has the best over the mafia. Arlacchi elaborates on Buscetta as being so entrenched in his mafia past and conflicted over his decision that he considered suicide again in the police station where he was held during the depositional period.

Buscetta, as narrated by Arlacchi, describes the interior monologue that came from collaborating:

*In the moments I was depressed I felt an unsupportable sense of shame. I had sullied my honor. I would no longer be able to face the men of Cosa Nostra with my head held high. I didn't feel at ease while I made accusations. My mentality of a man of honor impeded it. For my entire life I had felt true disgust for traitors, spies, and snitches.*<sup>233</sup>

Buscetta is described as victorious—his sense of belonging to an honorable mafia is the largest obstacle and also the largest catalyst for his collaboration. To uphold the honor of his past and of his mafia, he must perform an act that is precisely so difficult because it conflicts with one of the tenets of his formation. This paradoxical act simultaneously

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<sup>233</sup> "Nei momenti in cui ero depresso provavo un senso insopportabile di vergogna. Avevo macchiato il mio onore. Non avrei piu' potuto affrontare a testa alta gli uomini di Cosa Nostra. Non mi sentivo a mio agio accusando. La mia mentalità di uomo d'onore me lo impediva. Per tutta la vita avevo provato un vero ribrezzo per i delatori, le spie, i confidenti." (251)

confirms the morality of his character and his mafia; to glorify his past he must denounce the degradation of the 'honored society'.

Arlacchi's text is overwhelmingly pro-*pentitismo*; the text he creates uses the voice of Buscetta to demonstrate the value behind the *pentiti* in a time period in which they had come under harsh scrutiny in the national press. In Arlacchi's presentation of the text in the foreword, he states that by choosing the first-person narration he 'confers immediacy' to the text. In reality, the first-person construction gives credence to Buscetta's monument of the self. By constructing the text in this manner, Arlacchi leaves no space to question the narrative Buscetta provides and presents it as the *pentito* would do himself, as a monolithic testimony to the importance of his role in the anti-mafia, and the conviction of his choice as being founded in him by the moral values which initially attracted him to the 'old' mafia.

*La mafia ha vinto.*

*Intervista con Tommaso Buscetta, Saverio Lodato (1999)*

The Buscetta monument warps significantly between the time of his initial collaboration and his death in the year 2000. Buscetta becomes deeply disheartened after the historical events of the 1990s (namely, the significant death of Falcone and the failure of Third-Level investigations). In 1999, he granted a long and detailed interview to Saverio Lodato to reflect on what he saw as the Italian government's failure. Lodato, a journalist renowned for his coverage of the mafia, transformed the interview into a book in which he narrates and comments on the mafia climate and events in Sicily that rendered Buscetta's collaboration so important. The title of the book, *La mafia ha vinto (The Mafia Won)*, was suggested by Buscetta as he claimed to be defeated, like the State itself, by the modern

mafia of Corleone. Subtitled as “An Interview with Tommaso Buscetta,” it prefaces the dialogical quality of the texts. The book, published by Mondadori, is listed as a history book; Lodato’s role as mafia historian is highlighted in the author biography on the back of the book with a list of some of his many publications relating to the mafia. With an expectation of an inquiry into objective truth, the following text contains the same trends as those of Biagi and Arlacchi. Like the previous two texts, Lodato’s portrayal of Buscetta blurs the boundaries between genres and ultimately celebrates him as a respectable mafioso mourning an irretrievable past.

I posit that Lodato ultimately uses an established Buscetta figure contribution to create a political critique or, in the words of the book jacket, a “j’accuse! that is tough and evidenced in the face of the Italian political class and the new omertà.”<sup>234</sup> Evidenced, was perhaps a bit of an exaggeration on the part of the publishers as the evidence is subjectively filtered through Buscetta’s biography. The cover of the book foreshadows a great deal of what will be in the text, and seems to guide the reader better than the previous two texts (which contained minimal information on the book jacket). A glance at the cover reveals that the Buscetta constructed in this text is profoundly changed: “in a long and passionate interview conceded to Saverio Lodato in 1999, a few months before dying, Buscetta explains why the link between mafia, politics, and institutions has not been broken while he retraces the small and large phases of his own life.”<sup>235</sup> While known as a historian,

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<sup>234</sup> “un j’accuse duro e argomentato nei confronti della classe politica italiana e della nuova omertà.” (back cover).

<sup>235</sup> “in una lunga e appassionata intervista concessa a Saverio Lodato nel 1999, pochi mesi prima di morire, Buscetta spiega perché l’intreccio tra mafia, politica, e istituzioni non è stato sciolto mentre ripercorre piccole e grandi tappe della propria vita,” back cover.

Lodato's account (like Biagi's) fits Buscetta into the role as celebrity-professional mafioso; his intervention reads more like a tabloid than history, despite its classification as a 'history' text. The link between Buscetta's personal experience and his authority to comment on the contemporary mafia is one that is exploited throughout the entirety of the interview. Lodato has performed both an homage to and an appropriation of Buscetta's story and memory. He pays tribute to Buscetta's version of history and uses it to critique at the State institutions. The political critique afforded through this narrative is constructed upon an acceptance of the validity of the Buscetta monument; the idea of a criminal or self-serving Buscetta is never acknowledged as the vaguest of possibilities.

In the text, Buscetta solidifies his role as an exponent of the *anti-mafia* and distances himself from the identity of *mafioso* to which he had previously clung. His choice to defect had been reconfirmed in numerous defeats of the anti-mafia; in the preface to the book, Lodato informs the reader that Buscetta had lived these events as personal defeats. Through Lodato's role of interlocutor, Buscetta's new sense of self is supported; he describes Buscetta as a heroic character that has "something legendary" about him and describes his book as a project of preserving the memory of the anti-mafia movement through the figure of Buscetta. Lodato not only recognizes Buscetta as a *pentito*, but presents him as a potential savior in the battle against the mafia; in a note to the most recent edition of the text in 2007, Lodato questions why society has ceased to "honor the debt of the first big pentito, without whom we would still be in the stone age in the fight against organized crime."<sup>236</sup>

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<sup>236</sup> "Nessuno se la sente di onorare il debito con il primo grande pentito senza il quale saremmo ancora all'età della pietra nell'azione di contrasto contro la criminalità." (VII).



The text is greatly informed by the historical events of the fifteen years since the initial collaboration: Buscetta's sense of self has changed drastically with the passage of time, the temporal distance serves as a catalyst for his transformation. In the opening lines of the text, Buscetta launches into an analysis of precisely how he has struggled with and discovered his current identity; he speaks of a "major challenge to [my] identity"<sup>237</sup> and claims that for years, he had stopped thinking and reasoning like "Don Masino." Lodato takes this claim for granted and entrusts Buscetta with the task of explaining the causes behind his transformation, but the resulting novelty is that Buscetta finally portrays himself as a *pentito*, albeit a different type of *pentito* that shares little with the *infame* Buscetta first worried about being in his 1984 depositions. If the book is to serve as a political 'j'accuse,' the decision to portray the doubts and disappointments of a former mafioso is crucial; renouncing his former identity and fighting for justice, he portrays himself as superior to the ruling class. The monument of Arlacchi's text has been buried and battered down through a series of political and legislative upsets; Lodato performs a metaphorical unburial and polishing of the monument

A glance at the index of the text reveals Lodato's imperative in the construction of the text: Lodato assists in the construction of Buscetta as anti-mafia expert. Chapter titles reveal the extent of Buscetta's knowledge base, and how many events he is asked to interpret.<sup>238</sup> Within the structure of each chapter, Lodato performs an exposition of the

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<sup>237</sup> "travaglio della [mia] identità" (8)

<sup>238</sup> The chapter titles of the book are: I. La mafia futura sarà la mafia degli eredi II. Cercavo di raffreddare l'ottimismo del dottor Falcone III. Sono sempre salito sul carro dei perdenti IV. Dov'è Provenzano? V. Nella cattura di Riina qualcosa non va VI. Badalamenti potrebbe parlare dei suoi rapporti con i politici VII. Ma quali privilegi ai pentiti. . . VIII Non avrò mai un document americano IX Qualcuno ha stretto un nuovo patto con la mafia X. Ultimo atto. Appendici: I. Quando la vittoria sembrava dietro l'angolo II. La morte del grande Padrino

ideas that will be discussed and subsequently gives space to Buscetta to elaborate. The overall effect created is similar to that of Biagi's interview; in both texts the interlocutor endorses Buscetta's narrative (as presented verbatim) and endows it with a truthfulness factor associated with investigative journalism, and in the case of Lodato, history writing. The format of these texts is also similar, but Lodato intervenes much more frequently than Biagi, guiding the reader with explicative notes and reinterpretations of Buscetta's quoted words. While seemingly objective, he textually guides his reader to view the protagonist in a certain manner through retelling exclusive inside experiences of being a mafioso.

Lodato's interview with Buscetta takes place in the aftermath of the assassinations of judges Paolo Borsellino and Giovanni Falcone. The journalist allows Buscetta to narrate his life story and, having established his expertise on mafia matters (the Buscetta Theorem), lets him elaborate his opinion that the Italian state has ultimately failed in its attempt to rid the country of organized crime. Buscetta is depicted as possessing a great knowledge of the internal workings of the criminal hierarchy; after decades of 'professional formation' he is shown providing a unique interpretation into the state of affairs at the time of publication. The novelty of this autobiographical act is that, through the narration of his life, Buscetta is authorized to become an expert on the anti-mafia movement despite no formal study of organized crime. Buscetta's personal experiences testify to his expertise and transform him from the resisting figure of the 'mafioso of the antimafia' to a full blown 'pentito'.

This rendition of Buscetta shares many similarities with the previous texts; Buscetta continues to depict himself as a mythic character. He relishes the limelight and creates a cohesive narrative in which he poses himself as exceptional and pure. He claims to have

recovered from the painful experience of collaboration and to have left behind the guilt and torment he experienced in his depositions and in his discussions with Biagi and Arlacchi. Buscetta's collaboration, which had earlier been a cause for his own anguish, is both exalted and prescribed in this text. In a modern era in which the Corleone mafia rules, the role of the honorable mafioso is no longer a viable option-- the mafia myth essentially crumbled during the course of the previous decade. Buscetta's transformation to calling himself 'pentito' eulogizes *pentitismo* in that it is shown as a natural progression for a true mafioso in a sullied mafia. Buscetta never modifies the stable discourse he produces. Rather, at this point of defeat and degradation, he realizes his honor was maintained exactly because he collaborated. He reframes *pentitismo* as an act of courage, sacrifice and love, the same themes that previously were attributed to his old mafia.

As Lodato states, prior to this interview Buscetta had already recounted his life story and begun to create his persona through a chronological sequencing of the key events of his life. Lodato refers to Buscetta's literary collaborations with Biagi (1986) and Arlacchi (1994); his publication, too, is divided by main themes. Lodato authorizes Buscetta as an expert on his own experiences and urges him to link to the broader meaning behind these experiences. The final thematic division of the narrative poses Buscetta as a mafia correspondent, a role he easily adapts to. He uses his decades of experience in the society as a tool to decipher events that happened after his collaboration: the massacre of Falcone, the long and mysterious fugitive status of Bernardo Provenzano<sup>239</sup>, the capture of Totò

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<sup>239</sup> Provenzano would not be captured until 2006 in his hometown of Corleone, where he had been for many years. This considerate failing of the Italian state was one of many reasons that Buscetta doubted the integrity of the state in addressing the mafia problem post-Maxi Trial.

Riina, the debate on *pentitismo*, and his hypotheses of political relationships between the mafia and the new Republic.

Buscetta is both logical and elaborate in the conclusions he draws and the questions he poses to readers; to speak of any given event, he furnishes both personal and public evidence for the large claims he makes. He describes personal elements that help him to remember and contextualize seemingly minute details of his experience; through his usage of the autobiographical act he gains credibility from what Philip LeJeune famously theorizes as the “autobiographical pact” that draws readers to inherently trust the autobiographical subject as expert on the events and interpretation of his or her own past. However, as a life narrative (it is prefaced with a description of Buscetta’s intents: to reflect on his strange life and settle the counts before his death), it also functions on a public and political level. Buscetta complements the memory act Lodato wishes to perform and shapes the outcome through a self-portrayal in which his anti-mafia conviction is highlighted and his credibility is maintained. Buscetta is 71 years old at the time of the interview, and has been living with cancer for two years. He is preparing himself for his death, and this interview reads as a sort of last confession. He states:

This is the mirror of my present existence that I can show to you. If I manage to keep this sickness at bay—God willing—, it’s precisely because I’m at peace, have a clean conscience and the desire to keep living, without demands and without the fear of death... Now, before I surrender to this strange, strange world, I would like to take my last opportunity to say something.<sup>240</sup>

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<sup>240</sup> “Questo è lo specchio della mia esistenza attuale che posso offrirle. Se riesco a tenere la malattia il più lontano possibile—se Dio vorrà--, è proprio perché ho serenità, coscienza pulita, e la voglia ancora di vivere, senza pretese e senza paura della morte...Ora, prima di congedarmi da questo mondo così strano, vorrei avere l’ultima possibilità di dire qualcosa.” (9)

In Buscetta's 'last opportunity' to set the story straight, he reiterates that his past statements had all been true, and this is his chance to provide a no holds barred account on the degeneration of the political approach to eliminating the mafia. In a tongue in cheek comment on the truthfulness of his past and present statements, he remarks:

The truth is easy to remember. It's the lies that are difficult. They come to the surface, especially for someone like me who has undergone hundreds and hundreds of interrogations. My choice was sincere and loyal. I've always tried to show I've never made my choices with the aim of bargaining.<sup>241</sup>

Buscetta supports his claims of sincerity through the bitter sense of defeat he conveys in witnessing the after effects of the Maxi Trial. He reflects on his first interrogation with Falcone and comments on their mutual conviction that they were moving towards the elimination of *Cosa nostra*, but describes them as having deluded themselves: "we had misled ourselves to believe that the mafia would be defeated this time, that there would never again be mafia on our soil. At 71 years old, I have to accept that that my vision was mistaken, as was I, along with the judge whose life was taken away."<sup>242</sup> This act of association with Falcone presents Buscetta as an anti-mafia hero with the shared goal of ridding society of the mafia; the passage of time allows Buscetta to distance himself from the image of 'bargaining' collaborator and embody that of the defeated pentito.

The jarring relationship (I hesitate, like Falcone himself, to call it a *friendship*, although the book cover does not make this hesitation) between Falcone and Buscetta is

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<sup>241</sup> "La verità si ricorda sempre facilmente, sono le bugie che è molto difficile ricordare. Vengono a galla, soprattutto quando uno come me si è sottoposto negli anni a centinaia e centinaia di interrogatori. [...] Il mio calcolo era sincero e leale. Ho sempre cercato di dimostrare che non c'è mai stato nessuno scopo di scambio nelle mie scelte." (13)

<sup>242</sup> "[...] ci eravamo illusi che la mafia questa volta sarebbe stata sconfitta, che la mafia nella nostra terra non ce ne sarebbe stata mai più. A settantun anni mi devo rendere conto di aver sbagliato previsione, e insieme a me l'aveva sbagliata quel dottore al quale è stata tolta la vita." (14)

described by Buscetta as a union made possible by a shared system of values. He goes on to describe the destruction of these values as they were razed in the scorched earth power grab of the Corleonesi as a dual defeat of both the 'traditional' mafia and the state itself. To support this, Buscetta speaks of the handful of relatives he lost; the tactic of the 'traversal killing' quickly took the life of his brother-in-law ('the most harmless person I've ever met'<sup>243</sup>) and Leonardo Vitale (1984). Buscetta's response to these events allows him to underline how convinced he was, and remains, in his decision. This is one of a long line of offenses, one that inspired him to write a letter to judge Antonino Caponnetto<sup>244</sup> in which he recapitulates his conviction. Buscetta summarizes this letter to Lodato as such:

As far as I'm concerned, what they did did not serve to make me turn back. I will continue in my resolutions, that are neither of revenge of vendetta, but are dictated by the impossibility of continuing to live with such riff-raff. Only death can reduce me to silence. No offer can make me have doubts about abandoning the path I'm travelling. I was and I am aware of the risks to which I've exposed my family, but calculations for their lives, which I care for more than my own, will not make me go back into the arms of the mafia that now, more than ever, detests me. I've come to the conclusion that the mafia must be destroyed and everyone should collaborate with the state in this battle. And I have the biggest obligation, because I was part of that mafia. <sup>245</sup>

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<sup>243</sup> "La persona più innocua che abbia mai conosciuto." (36)

<sup>244</sup> Antonino Caponnetto was the head of the Anti Mafia Pool during the preparation of the Maxi Trial. He remained in this position from 1983 to 1989 when, to the chagrin of many, Antonino Meli was given the position over Falcone for his seniority. Meli quickly changed the approach of the pool, in what has been deemed its dismantling. Schneider and Schneider, 146.

<sup>245</sup> "Per quanto mi riguarda, ciò che hanno fatto non è servito a farmi tornare indietro. Continuerò nei miei propositi, che non sono né di rivincita né di vendetta, ma dettati dall'impossibilità di continuare a viver con siffatta gentaglia. Solo la morte può ridurmi al silenzio. Nessuna offerta potrà far nascere in me il dubbio di abbandonare la strada già intrapresa. La mia è stata una scelta di dignità, e la mia dignità di uomo non è in vendita. Ero e sono consapevole dei rischi a cui ho esposto la mia famiglia, ma il calcolo delle loro vite, cui tengo più della mia, non potrà farmi tornare nelle braccia della mafia che oggi più che mai mi detesta... Sono giunto alla conclusione che la mafia deve essere distrutta e che tutti devono collaborare con lo Stato in questa lotta. E l'obbligo maggiore l'ho io, che di quella mafia ho fatto parte," 37.

While Buscetta speaks often of his decisions to collaborate, very rarely does he reflect on the criminal implications of actually being in the mafia. This mere act distances him from the mafia itself and allows him to portray himself as an expert of the anti-mafia.

The changes within Buscetta are insisted on in Lodato's interview in a juxtaposition of Buscetta's eagerness to join the mafia (when he had a deep distrust of the State in the aftermath of WWII) and the breaking of his oath three decades later. While in many interviews Buscetta claims that even after his collaboration he still views himself as mafioso, in this interview with Lodato he begins to distance himself from that past image. He looks back on the early days with a mixture of self-alienation and embarrassment for his actions. He is concerned that his children will read the publication and undervalues his past crimes in response to Lodato's curiosity about his life in the mafia:

You want to know about me, about the first crimes I committed. I don't want to address this topic. I never even addressed it from a judiciary standpoint. They are facts that happened in the past and in giving explanations I feel a sense of shame. In any case, I would like to remind you that before being conducted to the [initiation] meeting, you must give proof of your value.

And I gave it, like all the others did. I could speak about it tranquilly, because everything has exceeded the statute of limitations, but I'm ashamed because my children could read this. I can no longer even remember the name of the deceased... I was a mafioso, and I should be viewed as such.<sup>246</sup>

In great contrast to other inquiries Buscetta underwent, in this publication he is given free reign to discuss his political observations. In the final chapter, "Qualcuno ha

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<sup>246</sup> "Ma lei vuole sapere di me, dei primi reati che ho commesso. Non voglio affrontare questo argomento. Non l'ho mai affrontato neanche dal punto di vista giudiziario. Sono fatti che appartengono al passato e a dare spiegazioni provo un senso di vergogna. Comunque, vorrei ricordare che prima di essere condotti all'appuntamento, si deve dare prova di valore e io la diedi, come la diedero tutti gli altri. Potrei parlarne tranquillamente, perché tutto è andato in prescrizione, ma ho vergogna che i miei figli leggano questo. Non ricordo più nemmeno il nome dei morti... sono stato un mafioso, ho commesso dei reati: così devo essere guardato," 50.

stretto un nuovo patto con la mafia,” Buscetta describes what he sees happening in Italy and why he is able to make these observations. “The reality for me is a far-away world, difficult to understand. I certainly observe with avidity what is happening in Italy and also, therefore, all that revolves around my old world as a mafioso.”<sup>247</sup> The problem, however, is just that: Buscetta is now an outsider looking in and no longer is afforded the exclusive point of view that has verifiable inside knowledge. Buscetta’s suppositions on the political scene are just that, suppositions. The presentation of these musings in a historical context is not only irresponsible, but also dangerous, they are directly linked to his own *view* of history in a narration that privileges subjective to objective truth. Buscetta draws on extremely incomplete information but speaks as an expert, in an outright critique of the seriousness of the government.

Buscetta states that in the past years, despite some important victories (the arrest of Toto’ Riina and Giovanni Brusca,<sup>248</sup> for example), the State has lost its momentum in dealing with the mafia, resulting in a phase of “normalcy” that the mafia has historically profited from. Citing the old adage that the mafia prefers silence over violence, Buscetta determines that someone within the government has made a protective pact with the mafia to ensure mutual success. While Buscetta does not cite names of who these complicit politicians could be, he furnishes evidence as if he himself were building a case against the mafia. He describes the “season of stragi” as a tactical series of messages to the government

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<sup>247</sup> L’attualità per me è un mondo lontano, difficile da capire. Certamente osservo con avidità tutto quanto che capita in Italia e quindi tutto ciò che si muove intorno al mio ex mondo di mafioso.” 145.

<sup>248</sup> Giovanni Brusca, who carried out the Capaci bomb killing of Falcone, collaborated with the state. In 2006, Lodato published another text with Mondadori relating to *pentiti*, this time using Brusca as his object of investigation in the pseudo-autobiography *Ho ucciso Giovanni Falcone*.



from the mafia; since then, he notes an unnerving silence on their behalf. Buscetta boldly states that “Cosa Nostra raised its voice to speak, and someone must have heard and understood. It’s not my hypothesis. Let’s look at the facts.”<sup>249</sup> Precisely while he’s conjecturing, he’s claiming the opposite.

Lodato’s role in this text should not to be underestimated—he is the supporting voice that gives credence to the hypotheses of Buscetta. In the chapter where Buscetta speaks at length about the political questions he’s posed to himself, Lodato builds the figure of Buscetta to be an intelligent political commentator. His admiration for Buscetta leads him to state: “Buscetta never managed to tame the free judgment that has always pushed him, for better or for worse, to freely demonstrate his thought. As a mafioso and as an anti-mafioso. Returning to him signifies recurring to what is perhaps Buscetta’s greatest gift: profound intellectual honesty.”<sup>250</sup> Buscetta’s integrity is still the center point of this narrative.

Overall, this book functions as a display of Buscetta’s personal and political reasoning. The private life of the individual provides the necessary anecdotes to portray Buscetta as a new man, distanced both physically and temporally (both in his new home in the United States, and the time that has passed are highlighted frequently in the interview) from the society that used to dominate his way of thinking and acting. This distancing has allowed Buscetta to fully embed himself in a role that was only an inkling in the past texts;

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<sup>249</sup> “Cosa Nostra alzò la voce per parlare a qualcuno, e qualcuno deve aver sentito e capito. Non è una mia congettura. Guardiamo i fatti,” 157.

<sup>250</sup> Buscetta non è mai riuscito a domare quell’indipendenza di giudizio che lo ha sempre spinto, nella buona e la cattiva sorte, a manifestare liberamente il suo pensiero. Da mafioso e da antimafioso. Tornare da lui significa ricorrere ancora una volta a quella che è forse la sua dote principale: una profonda onestà intellettuale,” 156.

he has become defined as anti-mafioso. What's more is that his new visage is endorsed by a mafia expert in an homage to, and appropriation of, the Buscetta product. The stakes have reached their apex with this text, leading one to ask: if a former mafioso is viewed as a mafia authority fifteen years after breaking the oath of omertà, has the title of the interview, *La mafia ha vinto*, become a self-fulfilling prophecy?

### *Conclusion*

As I've aimed to show with the analyses of the commonalities and differences of these three texts, the monument that Buscetta built of himself in his depositions proved to be fertile territory for journalists and scholars alike to respond to contemporary issues. In Biagi's text, before the beginning of the Maxi Trial, Buscetta is a signifier of an old and mythic mafia that has been destroyed; his narrative is authorized by a journalist before the law. In Arlacchi's text, the Buscetta narrative is absorbed as Arlacchi uses the exemplary story of Buscetta in a time period in which the value of state collaborators was under attack. His pro-Buscetta narrative becomes pro-pentitismo as he portrays the inestimable value of Buscetta in the understanding of the mafia phenomenon. Finally, as our hero nears his death, Lodato performs a final act of homage to Buscetta's courage and sacrifice, but also appropriates his voice to critique the institutional and political class for retreating in the battle against Cosa Nostra. By endowing Buscetta with the right to speak on these topics, he endows the "dummy" with a voice—revealing how the inherently ventriloquist act of co-authorship can cause a personal narrative to become a political act.

These celebrity memoirs remind us that "the celebrity image is a cultural lode of multiple meanings, mined for its symbolic resonances and, simultaneously, a floating

signifier with libidinal energies, social longings, and political aspirations.”<sup>251</sup> The Buscetta image seems to have satisfied this impulse of making meaning. These authors, in collaboration with Buscetta, have managed to mine multiple uses from the individual narrative, demonstrating how the celebrity narrative is endowed with social, cultural, and political significance in the public sphere.

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<sup>251</sup> Coombe, 59.

## From Document to Drama: Falcone, Buscetta, and the Maxi Remembered

The image of Buscetta descending from an airplane, cloaked in a blanket and flanked by policemen has become an iconic representation of the *mafioso-pentito* in the precise moment that he arrives on Italian soil, convinced in his decision to begin collaborating with the Italian State. The image has been transformed through its numerous reproductions and reenactments into an icon. An icon is a sign that *represents* its object mainly by its similarity to it, it is not an arbitrary sign but one based on likeness or resemblance. Buscetta's arrival in Italy was just one of many dramatic appearances of the pentito in the press; he had a long history of being represented in the news in his pre-collaboration trials, on the occasion of previous arrests, and subsequently at the maxi trial. This image emerges upon his extradition to Italy to collaborate, and remains the most iconic representation that can be read as a symbol of a mafioso quite literally being ushered into the legal sphere.

Buscetta has been embraced as image not only in the press, but also in the world of fashion, as evidenced by the fashion house Dolce and Gabbana's clamorous decision in 1994 to launch a "Buscetta line" inspired by the elegant suits of the mafia informant.<sup>252</sup> Buscetta as icon has served not only the fashion industry, but his signature look is embraced in the cinematic world to connect viewer to purportedly true visions of the past. Buscetta as icon, donning dark sunglasses and silk suits, appears continuously in cinematic representations: instantly recognizable as Buscetta in a specific period, filmmakers waste no time by embracing pre-existent links between image and individual. These links between

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<sup>252</sup> Amy M. Spindler, "The Mafia Informer Look," *New York Times* (New York, NY), June 30, 1994, accessed October 28, 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/1994/06/30/garden/the-mafia-informer-look.html>.

image and actuality are embraced and used to impart a message to the viewer, and Buscetta as icon becomes a powerful node through which filmmakers speak to audiences. Buscetta becomes doubly mediated, the symbol of him built by the media is a point of both return and departure for the narratives brought to screen.

These links to ‘real world’ events represent a new trend in mafia movies in a post-Maxi Trial age. Unlike previous films that portrayed mafia through dubious, mysterious, or romanticizing narratives, the docudramas I analyze in this chapter make use of historical events (i.e. Buscetta and Falcone’s meetings in which they discuss what *Cosa nostra* really is, murders of judges and police) and serve a range of purposes: they celebrate, critique, and question elements of a shared Italian past. In films like *Giovanni Falcone* (1993), *I Giudici* (1999), and *Giovanni Falcone- L’uomo che sfidò Cosa nostra* (2006) a trend emerges that reveals that while they are seemingly celebratory for their focus on heroes of the anti-mafia, they ultimately present a deeply conflicted view of the past as they show justice as relying on an isolated individual instead of on the justice system. The individual in question that gives the films I analyze their *raison d’être* in the years after his death is none other than Giovanni Falcone.<sup>253</sup> While other scholars have focused on the general plots and themes of the films and have attempted a new mafia filmography in which new trends have emerged, I will instead hone in on the role of the filmic *pentito* par-excellence: Buscetta. While initially I aimed to analyze the role of *pentiti* in general on film, I quickly came to

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<sup>253</sup> It bears mentioning that this tendency of celebratory films that recognize the sacrifice of individuals in the justice system does not just focus on Falcone. The films that launch this trend were actually released before his death with movies like *Cento giorni a Palermo* (a 1984 movie based on the truncated mission and ultimate death of Carlo Alberto Dalla Chiesa in Palermo) and continue far beyond his death with films like *Paolo Borsellino* (2004), *Paolo Borsellino- i 57 giorni* (2012). These films all embrace the docudrama genre in portraying exceptional individuals that sacrificed their lives for the Italian state.

realize that in the selection of works that are most interesting on a discursive level, the role of a generic *pentito* was simply not present. Instead, the movies that inform my argument rely on the specific *pentito* embodied in Tommaso Buscetta. This choice is not casual, but rather closely tied to the genre of storytelling that came about in light of the Maxi Trial. As Meccia notes in *MediaMafia*, the Maxi Trial and the clamorous and newsworthy deaths of 1992 changed mafia movies in several key ways.<sup>254</sup>

Before Buscetta's collaboration at the Maxi Trial, filmmakers had relied on a variety of sources to make mafia movies. Initially those sources were literary, like in the case of the frequently nominated first mafia film *In nome della legge* (Pietro Germi, 1949) based on the 1948 book *Piccola pretura* by Giuseppe Guido Loschiavo.<sup>255</sup> The film, like the book, does not have an informant figure, per se, but shows a relationship between the mafioso and the state representative as mutually recognizing the other as powerful and vowing to work together. In other cinematic representations, auteurs like Salvatore Rosi (*Cadaveri Eccellenti*, 1976) and Elio Petri (*Todo modo*, 1976) recur to the works of Sciascia to bring their mafia theories to screen.<sup>256</sup> In an era in which the Italian State had no legislation specifically designed to protect defectors from organized crime, filmmakers had little choice but to rely on fictions to bring the mafia to screen. This tendency, however, has repercussions that are made most visible from the relationship between Captain Bellodi

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<sup>254</sup> Andrea Meccia, *MediaMafia: Cosa nostra tra cinema e tv* (Trapani: Di Girolamo, 2014). For further information on the evolution and trends of the mafia movie, see for reference: Dana Renga, *Mafia Movies: A Reader* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011); Vittorio Albano, *La mafia nel cinema siciliano: da 'In nome della legge' a 'Placido Rizzotto'* (Manduria: Barbieri, 2003); George S. Larke-Walsh, *Screening the Mafia: Masculinity, Ethnicity and Mobsters from The Godfather to The Sopranos* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2010).

<sup>255</sup> Meccia, 13.

<sup>256</sup> Meccia, 16.

and Don Mariano in the film: like in the book, the Captain treats Mariano with reverence and must come to terms with his own fascination. These tendencies of mutual respect and reconciliation between mafioso and statesman recur in the new cycle of films, but in these the outcome has higher stakes as the mafioso is no longer a narrative invention, but a historical figure whose presence drastically influenced the delivery of justice.

According to Meccia, as mafia presence was increasingly violent in a public realm that included murdering public officials, there was a shift towards the socially conscious ‘*cinema d’impegno*.’ Authors including Giuseppe Ferrara in *Il Sasso in Bocca* (1969) referred to events from the news or information from local trials to make movies that denounced the mafia. Still however, there was no real informant to represent.<sup>257</sup> An inkling of what was to come was also portrayed by Ferrara in his 1983 *Cento giorni a Palermo*, that portrayed Carlo Alberto Dalla Chiesa’s brief stint as anti-mafia judge in Palermo before his murder.

After the Maxi Trial, however, there was a true boom in mafia movies, or rather, ‘anti-mafia’ movies as Meccia begins to call them at this point. There was a drastic rise in the recurrence to individual stories of martyrs (from mafia families and political parties alike: Rita Atria, Giuseppe Impastato, Placido Rizzotto) and national heroes (like Rosario Livatino, Dalla Chiesa, Falcone, Borsellino, policemen, bodyguards, and many more that lost their lives working for justice). As more information was available to filmmakers, they

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<sup>257</sup> Informed readers will argue that there was, in fact, a proto-pentito that could be represented: Leonardo Vitale. This story, however, would not be told until far after his courageous decision to confess his crimes to the police: as he was imprisoned himself for the crimes he was involved in, he was never called to trial as a witness and eventually was transferred to a psychiatric hospital where he was held for those same accusations. The Vitale narrative would eventually enter into the cycle of films that recognized the sacrifice of individuals dedicated to eradicating the mafia.

rapidly began to bring this information to screen. The most striking innovation in this new cycle of films, though, is dictated by the historical experience of the Maxi Trial, and comes in the form of a state collaborator that comes from the pages of the newspapers: the informant brought to screen from 1992 onward is consistently an iconic rendering of Buscetta. Interestingly, the figure does not appear in any significant way until he is paired with Falcone after his death.

Within this larger new tendency of portraying the mafia beyond the trope of the mysterious sect of traditional brotherhood, honor, and mutual respect, the character of Buscetta emerges often in the new narratives of Falcone's heroism. Through an understanding and analysis of the character on screen, I posit that his character is no longer merely the Robin Hood hero against the mafia as seen at trial; rather, the role ascribed to him on screen is one both narrative and symbolic. In the linking between document and image, Buscetta serves ultimately as a figure that allows for the construction of a new hero that is unencumbered by the complexities of being a former mafioso, a hero that is portrayed as perseverant, brave, and honest to the core: Giovanni Falcone.

The films that revisit Falcone's career in service of justice rightly follow in the trend of heroization and martyrization that the press made use of while portraying Buscetta himself. If, as claimed in *I Giudici* (1999), Falcone was the engine that provoked the movement of the wheels of justice, Buscetta has entered the scene alongside Falcone to both guide the train and provide the raw materials that allow it to cover so much ground. Beyond the metaphor of the train of justice, Buscetta plays a multitude of roles in the docudramatic reconstructions of the period between his confessions and Falcone's death: he becomes obstacle, friend, advisor, and confidante. His role is amplified beyond the scope



of his historical role as *pentito*: Buscetta as icon pervades the texts as a reminder of the ‘veracity’ of the events unfolding on screen and as a symbol of an old and honorable mafia.

### *Chapter Structure*

While I briefly mentioned the dominating trends in movies that took the Sicilian mafia as their area of interest, I would like to furthermore contextualize the role of the *pentito* or the *infame*. Buscetta was, of course, the first *pentito* to break the code of *omertà* in such a newsworthy fashion, becoming protagonist at trial and in coverage of the events. As follows, the role created in his likeness departs from the old standard of the nefarious traitor portrayed as a double-crossing criminal with only his self-interest in mind. Unlike the repetitive image of the lowlife snitch who manipulates law-enforcement to the benefit of the mafia, Buscetta’s character plays a role on screen that allows for a new conception of the *pentito* as indispensable in the justice process and also as an earnest figure that (yes, while simultaneously benefitting) collaborates with justice for the betterment of society instead of personal gain.

As I will explore in this chapter, I believe that through the effective employment of the docudrama genre, these films return to the period of the Maxi Trial to represent varying versions of history with particular aims in mind. Mafia films prior to 1986 did not have the ontological privilege of the extensive knowledge of the trial that was declared to be “trial of the century”: after the trial, filmmakers almost instantaneously began to bring the events of trial to the big screen. In doing so, they frequently draw on an almost formulaic combination of dramatized narrative and raw images from contemporary news sources like television reports, newspapers, and first-hand accounts.

In selecting films to explore both the narrativization of the historic period and Buscetta's role in such, it seemed pertinent to choose a body of films that directly interact with the period. As Meccia mentions, the early 1990s brought about a massive shift in the media perception of the mafia as either innocuous, inexistent, invented, or impertinent. A previously unthinkable filmography has come to occupy a central role in Italian cultural production; it had been rendered a topic of endless iterations that is no longer concerned with only the Sicilian mafia but also has expanded to cover (in albeit different ways) a variety of organized crime syndicates that occupy the peninsula. The decisive shift in these productions from vaguely apologetic mafia fictions to purportedly 'factual' returns to historical moments was marked by the death of Falcone. Any doubts that could have remained about the nature of the mafia and its permissibility in civil society were squelched instantly in the explosion at Capaci. In an incredible array of visions of the event, the relationship between Buscetta and Falcone is consistently portrayed as a catalyst of Falcone's success and death because of that very referent.

The movies that most directly treat this period have many commonalities in terms of aesthetics and narrative and have been selected on the basis of their style while considering the historical period. Starting from 1993 with Giuseppe Ferrara's first foray into Falcone's life and death, the Maxi Trial has become a touchstone for evaluating the history of the period through docudrama. To say nothing of straightforward documentary (like Rai's production *Maxi Più 25*) and history television programming (shows like Pietro Grasso's "*Lezioni di mafia*"), the topic provides ample inspiration for 'infotainment.' Infotainment itself consists in the combination of information and entertainment in media (usually in television) and contains many of the same elements of docudrama, in both

selection of story and in presentational style that tends toward the flashy and sensational representations of public affairs.<sup>258</sup> Beyond Ferrara's 1993 initial foray, my selection of movies includes the Italy/US co-production *I Giudici (Excellent Cadavers)* in 1999 (Ricky Tognazzi), and the 2006 television movie *Giovanni Falcone- L'uomo che sfidò cosa nostra* (Antonio and Andrea Frazzi).<sup>259</sup> In each of the films, the usage of documentary aesthetics influences the moral message of the film. My goal is to analyze how the docudrama form privileges an interaction with history that both questions the veracity of historical accounts and puts forth moralizing claims on the past. The issues that arise from this exploration tie closely to themes of the previous chapters and points to a recurrent idea of the constructed narratives and the discrepancies between them. Careful and critical readings of these narratives that use the historical record to support their arguments allow an opportunity to understand how history is *produced* on a most literal level.

### *Docudrama: A Brief Theoretical Introduction*

Prior to delving in to scene analyses, it is essential to consider how docudramas function as texts. The genre, hybrid in nature (documentary and drama serve as the roots of the term), borrows stylistically from both of its 'parent' genres: from documentary it preserves a tie to the 'discourses of sobriety' that Nichols declares as an impetus of the

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<sup>258</sup>258 Generally treated with caution and often with disdain, 'infotainment' according to Daya Kishan Thussu, is "a neologism which emerged in the late 1980s to become a buzzword, a handy catchall for all that was wrong with contemporary television [...] the phenomenon of infotainment denotes a type of television news where style triumphs over substance, the mode of presentation becoming more important than the content." Daya Kishan Thussu, *News as Entertainment: The Rise of Global Infotainment* (Sage, 2008), 6-7.

<sup>259</sup> Of note in this context are also two other films by the name *Cadaveri Eccellenti*, the 1976 Francesco Rosi *film d'autore* and the 2006 Marco Turco documentary that has Alexander Stille narrate the contents of his book alongside his local tour guide Letizia Battaglia, renowned photographer whose photographs for *L'Ora di Palermo* evidenced the bloody murders taking place during the heated years of the second mafia war.

form, and from drama it maintains a standard plot structure and an appeal to emotions. This usage of drama at the root of the form makes these products appealing to the masses in a manner that traditional documentary eschews. Furthermore, the tie to drama allows these products to continue the previous tradition of mafia movies that embraced dramatic story lines, plot lists, and sensationalist imagery. Through shortening the gap between documentary and drama, docudrama allows for the production of an argument evidenced by the historical world and entrenched in the sensational world. For Nichols, docudrama is an “essentially fictional domain” related to “stories based on fact but performed by actors and scripted from both documents and conjecture.”<sup>260</sup> Despite Nichols’ conception of the fiction of docudrama, the combination of conjecture and documents allows for a complex mingling of hard evidence and pro-filmic narrative. According to Steve Lipkin in his book *Real Emotional Logic: Persuasive Strategies in Docudrama*, when we accept that the profilmic events come from the historical world, “we are also asked to grant that these events might have happened in much the ways we are about to see them depicted.”<sup>261</sup> Furthermore, Lipkin sets out to show how “those links between actuality and re-creation [...] function to justify a docudrama’s argument.”<sup>262</sup>

According to Lipkin, docudrama calls on a “suspension of disbelief” on the viewers’ part which is strategically encouraged through the structure of the film itself. Three main strategies of cinematic articulation that Lipkin describes as “establish[ing] iconic and indexical proximity, bringing actuality into the same cinematic space with the film’s

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<sup>260</sup> Bill Nichols, *Representing Reality: Issues and Concepts in Documentary* (Bloomington, IN: IUP), 160.

<sup>261</sup> Steven N. Lipkin, *Real Emotional Logic: Film and Television Docudrama as Persuasive Practice* (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 2002), 68

<sup>262</sup> Lipkin, 68.

fictional constructions”<sup>263</sup> are those of modeling, sequencing, and interactions. These strategies can all be found within the body of films I analyze and consist in iconic reconstructions of referents (modeling), arrangement of actual and re-created shots and scenes in succession (sequencing) and placing actual and related filmic elements together within a scene (interactions).<sup>264</sup> Through these strategies, indexical proximity increases alongside “the apparent validity of the argument and the film’s persuasive power.”<sup>265</sup>

The documentary aspects inherent in docudrama are a potentializing tool that help carve a moral argument on the outside world. While the structure of the melodrama plot offers an opportunity for making pointed arguments, the semblance of truth that accompanies documentarian endeavors permeates the text and exemplifies that onscreen arguments are based on the facts of the stories that take place. Through techniques that “underscore the documentary basis of [these] images,”<sup>266</sup> the validity of an argument built by narrative is enhanced. Through my focus on the function of the *pentito* figure in these docudramas, I aim to establish the purpose of the on-screen figure and *how* through his activation the moral arguments on screen are amplified and modified. Extending these arguments into the historical world of the audience, I aim to ultimately show how the Buscetta figure has come to occupy a pivotal role in the memorializing historical discourse of the period.

It is not my goal to establish these films as docudramas (which bears mentioning as all of the movies are classified under the nomenclature of drama, crime, thriller, and even

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<sup>263</sup> Lipkin, 81.

<sup>264</sup> Lipkin, 69.

<sup>265</sup> Lipkin, 81.

<sup>266</sup> Lipkin, 74

comedy and biography). Rather, I am interested in the generic conventions they use to construct on screen arguments about a past they paint as 'real.' Of particular interest to the overall project are the narrative discrepancies between movies that essentially aim to recount the same specific historical period, bringing to mind Lipkin's conception that in docudrama, the 'docu' prefix is more of a qualifier, but the root of the term deeply informs the final product. *Drama* is at the root of the form, and the 'documents' within the drama fortify the narrative by anchoring it in reality. Furthermore, reading docudramas requires not only the suspension of disbelief, but a recognition that it uses "narrative structure to advocate its view of its subject; in docudrama the narrative components of character, conflict, and resolution cannot be separated from the view of actuality they forward."<sup>267</sup> My aim then, is to read these films through the framework of docudrama with a particular focus on how the combination of document and narrative contribute to the argument offered about Buscetta across the filmography. As Lipkin would put it, "[T]he stories of docudrama attempt to persuade us with a logic of motivated iconicity."<sup>268</sup> Through embracing iconic images (for example, the previously mentioned photograph of Buscetta descending from the airplane), the docudramas maneuver within a range of familiar images to slyly produce narratives that disguise themselves as documentable truth.

Persuasive elements of docudrama are often to be found in the documents that support the dramatic narrative. A variety of conventional techniques are described by Lipkin as 'dramatic evidence' that are essential in easing the tensions between the sober discourses of documentary and the moralizing messages of drama. Through usage of dramatic

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<sup>267</sup> Lipkin, 4

<sup>268</sup> Lipkin, 4

evidence, a product is able to leave the enclosure of the screen and make marked commentary on the historical world. Through overarching narrative choices that prioritize certain information or events over others (what Paul Ricoer or Hayden White would refer to as ‘emplotment’), a viewer is led to conceive of the rhetoric on screen as not only based in fact, but as a compelling argument about occurrences in the ‘real world.’<sup>269</sup>

The closer a film’s indexical relation to the past, the more compelling the argument it displays. Lipkin discusses a plethora of techniques used to increase the indexical link between image and reality. The techniques are based in both content and image, like that of pictorial linking which takes into consideration casting and locational impact to increase the modelling warrant, or rather the legitimating strategies based in iconic reconstructions. Consideration of public knowledge (i.e., addressing well-known public events) and living sources (collaboration with living referents that lived through or were involved in the events) also prove fruitful methods to increase indexical links to the past. Furthermore, links are offered by the narrative structure as well: temporal order and plot of narrative are one way in which this is done through selection of events to include and the chronological structure brought to screen. Perhaps, however, the most significant link found in the body of works examined here is that which Lipkin describes as the link to preexisting texts: this method offers indication of sources, sometimes in an explicit manner through titling, and uses images of media coverage in an implicit reference to original events.

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<sup>269</sup> Emplotment, according to Hayden White in his seminal work *Metahistory*, is defined as “the process through which facts presented in ‘chronicles’ are encoded as components of plots” and reveals that “no historical event can itself tell a story, tragic or ironic: it can only be presented as such [...]” This idea of emplotment supports a constructionivist view of narrative and history itself and serves as a useful tool to reveal the historical narratives on screen. Vincent B. Leitch and William E. Cain, eds, *Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism* (New York & London: WW Norton & Company, 2010), 1534.

With a close eye on the various linking methodologies brought to screen in this body of works, my goal is to assess how the figure of Buscetta is used as a tool within the larger narrative structure of the films and how his role is presented in various iterations of one historical period. The films that provoke these reflections all call on the *pentito* to varying extents, through a chronological exploration of similarities and differences between the employment of Buscetta on screen, one can arrive at a holistic understanding of present tense evaluations of the past, and on how films that make explicit claims to 'history' call on seemingly factual information with results that are entrenched in the realm of creative narrative production. An investigation of these narratives and techniques reveals how complex historical events are modified, potentialized, narrativized, and romanticized for audience consumption and entertainment.

### ***Film analyses***

#### *Giovanni Falcone* (Giuseppe Ferrara, 1993)

On the editorial page of the 1993 edition of *Carte di Cinema*, the editors express their full support of Giuseppe Ferrara for his directorial choices in making the instant-pic memorializing Giovanni Falcone. The director, for his portrayal of characters in the eponymous movie, (according to the courts) defamed Bruno Contrada (ex-SISDE agent, already sentenced to 10 years of jail for *associazione a delinquere*) and Vincenzo Geraci, named as the 'querelante giudice.'<sup>270</sup> Their roles in the movie show them as shadowy figures employed within the Justice Hall and despite (at least in the case of Contrada) the

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<sup>270</sup> *Carte di Cinema* 1993, 1.



change of names and physiognomies, show them as adversaries of Falcone that both indirectly and directly lead to his death and to the obstacles that prevented his election to the CSM.<sup>271</sup> The case underlines the overlap between fiction and historical fact inherent to the docudrama style and illustrates the real-world consequences of blending those two elements with a purposeful narrative. The legal repercussions are unsurprising as ties to the immediate historical period are rife within the movie. The movie, that is most-often described as an Instant-Picture, makes use of a variety of techniques that signal its link to chronicled events but does so in a manner that puts them at the service of what reads as a political drama.

According to Silvia Fumarola's assessment of the film in *La Repubblica* after an early screening of the film for magistrates in Rome, the movie reads "Come se tanti articoli di cronaca fossero stati trasformati in immagini, per ogni scena c'è una didascalia con un nome [...] una località o una data."<sup>272</sup> This may not come as a surprise, as Ferrara's own filmmaking background was rooted in documentary (he had made around eighty by the end of the Sixties, according to his obituary) and his filmography includes a 1966 short about the 'Ndrangheta entitled "La mafia di Aspromonte." Furthermore, Ferrara had worked on mafia fiction films as early as 1970 when he worked with Michele Pantaleone on *Il Sasso in Bocca*. In 1984, with the event of Carlo Alberto Dalla Chiesa's assassination

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<sup>271</sup> Giovanni Falcone's failed election to the CSM (Consiglio Superiore della Magistratura) in 1990 is omnipresent in the biographical films about the judge: it is presented as a final obstacle that the judge is unable to overcome and as a confirmation of the judicial and political forces that are shown as undermining and derailing his work.

<sup>272</sup> Silvia Fumarola, "Falcone diventa un film o un ricordo tradito?," *La Repubblica* (Roma), October 9, 1993, last accessed October 31, 2018, <http://ricerca.repubblica.it/repubblica/archivio/repubblica/1993/10/09/falcone-diventa-un-film-un-ricordo-tradito.html>.

(1982), Ferrara directed an instant-picture, that combined his documentary past with a desire for social justice.<sup>273</sup> Upon his death in 2016, *La Repubblica* remembered him as a “regista dell’impegno civile” with a “filmografia dedicata alla storia italiana (e ai suoi misteri).”<sup>274</sup>

Precisely within this impulse to historicize the ‘mysteries of Italy,’ Ferrara mixes document with pro-filmic narrative to create a movie (the first of many that explicitly used Falcone’s life and death as their object of investigation) that sets up a series of tropes that will be recapitulated in other versions of Falcone’s life. Of particular interest is the manner in which the movie, while often making claims to reality, constructs a political narrative that dramatizes theories of betrayal and political corruption as equally truthful as the confirmed events of the Maxi Trial and the chronicled news of Falcone’s death.

From the opening credits of the instant-pic, the movie reveals its stylistic debt to docudrama with opening credits that state that “This film is based on documents from trial, from law enforcement, from editorials, and is based on declarations from: [...]”<sup>275</sup> followed by long list of recognizable names. Amongst these are figures that will appear further on in the movie, like Paolo Borsellino, Antonino Caponnetto (leader of the Anti-Mafia Pool), and individuals that closely knew the judge, like Maria Falcone (his sister), Pietro Grasso

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<sup>273</sup> Ferrara had faced a similar polemic with *Cento giorni a Palermo*, a film which was described as one in which “ancora una volta si mescolano finzione e documento, la cui realizzazione fu preceduta da un ‘dibattito di massa sui contenuti.’” Umberto Cantone, “Ferrara e i film di mafia le intuizioni ‘scandalose’,” *La Repubblica* (Roma), June 19, 2016, last accessed November 1, 2018, <https://ricerca.repubblica.it/repubblica/archivio/repubblica/2016/06/29/ferrara-e-i-film-di-mafia-le-intuizioni-scandalosePalermo08.html?ref=search>.

<sup>274</sup> Alessandra Vitali, “È morto Giuseppe Ferrara, regista dell’impegno civile,” *La Repubblica* (Roma), June 27, 2016, last accessed November 2, 2018, [http://www.repubblica.it/spettacoli/cinema/2016/06/25/news/morto\\_giuseppe\\_ferrara-142817609/](http://www.repubblica.it/spettacoli/cinema/2016/06/25/news/morto_giuseppe_ferrara-142817609/).

<sup>275</sup> “Questo film e’ basato su documenti processuali, delle forze dell’ordine, editoriali e sulle dichiarazioni rilasciate da:[...]”

(Associate Judge in the Maxi Trial). The presence of this written information immediately conveys to the viewer that what they are about to witness has come about through rigorous research in which multiple documents and living referents participate. As soon as the film claims its links to documents, however, these documents are put at the service of dramatic narrative.

To this end, two opening scenes intermingle as they establish the premise of the movie as an intermingling between two opposing but equally dedicated entities: while a mafioso takes his oath and transfers a burning saint from hand to hand, the semblance of Giovanni Falcone (played by a bearded Michele Placido) is sworn in as a judge. Within the first minutes of the movie there is a heightened usage of pictorial indexical linking: Falcone drives through a city-scape characterized by near traffic incidents, a horse pulling a wagon filled with citrus fruits and his arrival at work is implicated by a long shot of the Palazzo di Giustizia that pans out to reveal the city of Palermo. Blended with these scenes, however, is an enamored and energetic Falcone who narrowly escapes a car-accident with Francesca Morvillo seated in the passenger seat, an image that presents itself as foreshadowing for the near 10-minute sequence of the Capaci bombing that will come later in the film, in which Morvillo specifically asks an agent to sit by her husband's side as music heightens and the viewer recognizes this will be their final drive together. Morvillo's narrative role allows Falcone with an outlet to air his suspicions and provides an initial example of how emotional based narrative intermingles with factual based ones.

This trend continues in the film and presents a pointed critique of the Democrazia Cristiana (DC) and colleagues of Falcone within the Justice Palace, and suggests that while the mafia was a force to contend with, the unclear division between mafia and state were

the ultimate causes of initial failures of prosecuting the mafia, and ultimately Falcone's death. The power of these accusations gain strength from the films link to what Lipkin calls "consideration of public knowledge" but also garners momentum from the emotional narratives in which Falcone's relationships are key in understanding the message of the film.

This subjugation of document to emotion occurs within the initial scenes of the films: as soon as Falcone begins his work in the Justice Hall, his colleagues are introduced with labels indicating their counterpoints in the historical record. Falcone is portrayed as good natured, bonding with these men over the inefficacy of their office and making recurring jokes about the lack of photocopiers, and later, paper to use in the new photocopier sent from Rome. As Falcone settles into his job in Palermo, public knowledge and dramatic narrative is exploited in the movie as a series of Falcone's colleagues, the 'excellent cadavers' that include Chinnici, Dalla Chiesa, and Cassarà, are taken down one by one. With each murder, an on-screen date is shown to doubly affirm the veracity of the events through their temporal indexicality. With each murder, Falcone mourns the loss and is pushed to question the apparent conspiracy taking place around him.

The conspiracy Falcone fears and the distrust inherent in his work is brought to screen in a series of black and white footage that presents itself often coupled with conversations or events that underline the danger in being an anti-mafia magistrate in Palermo. The first usage of black-and-white is a citation of Ingmar Bergman's *The Seventh Seal* in which the knight protagonist plays a game of chess with the figure of death, with the certainty that Death will inevitably have the better of him. Falcone is repeatedly shown watching this scene, in which death always wins, despite Francesca's eventual commentary

on this obsession. In moments of personal threat, short cuts to the film establish a feeling of futility in his work, and danger for his imminent death. In conjunction of the other black-and-white footage, which shows Falcone's colleagues performing nefarious actions, like listening to a taped phone call that warns of the car bomb that would kill Judge Chinnici, or a flash-back in which the (fictional) Judge Pizzillo warns of "pentole che non devono essere scoperchiate" stating that Falcone should be loaded up with "processetti." This technique of flashback occurs as well when Falcone and Borsellino discuss the presence of the mafioso Inzerillo at a DC campaign meeting while a warrant was out for his arrest. In the meeting, an exaggerated speech takes place in which politicians discuss the need to make space for "gli amici, e gli amici degli amici," in the political landscape, clearly alluding to those 'friends' in the mafia. These scenes clearly signal a realm of imagination through imagined occurrences, leading to a logical division between the fiction of these scenes within a movie that otherwise establishes its adherence to historical record. Their presence is purely narrative and encourages the viewer to participate in the drama of the movie while being aware that these fears of Falcone are rooted in the events of his day to day life.

This suggested divide enhances the narrative weight of Falcone as *real life* hero that is perceptive and aware of the unseen and unacknowledged forces that continuously undermine him throughout the film, even if he does not have proof to oust them. Within the majority of the film, which signals itself as a credible narrative through the frequent presence of on screen journalists, newsboys, TV cameras, radio reports and TV footage that point to pre-existing sources, Falcone is unsure exactly who to trust and how to successfully perform his job in Palermo. Falcone's saving grace, presented amidst

colleagues he cannot trust fully and others that were killed by the mafia, is shown through the presence of the pentito Buscetta, who allows him to reach the maxim of his success.

While in most of the other films the relationship is one of exclusivity between Falcone and Buscetta, this rendition of the narrative calls on multiple *pentiti* to move the narrative. The four pentiti shown on screen, Buscetta, Salvatore ‘Totuccio’ Contorno, Antonino Calderone and Francesco Marino Mannoia, occupy different amounts of screen time but all point to what is an overwhelming tendency in my selection of films: without these *pentiti*, Falcone would be stuck. Unlike the characters with whom Falcone works, the *pentiti* provide (ironically) a reprieve from the environment of suspicion omnipresent in the Palazzo di Giustizia. Frequently, their depositions are cut with imagery that displays the truth in their statements: a technique that first occurs in the text before Buscetta turns pentito and establishes his extensive knowledge of the mafia war while he is still in Brazil.

The onscreen relationship between Buscetta and Falcone revolves around the fact that Buscetta is ‘disposto a parlare,’ (ready to speak) and that he will do so openly. Buscetta’s response, “non bastera’ una notte intera, dottore Falcone” (‘one full night won’t be enough, judge Falcone’) to reveal what he knows, is very close to what a well-versed viewer would know as a misquote of his true statement “non basterebbe una notte intera”. Through this slight change, Buscetta’s collaboration is already decided and Falcone concludes that it’s because “above all because he’s understood that I respect and consider him.”<sup>276</sup> When Geraci questions whether Falcone is aware of the circumstances of Buscetta’s arrest, he brushes it off by quickly restating the current conditions but stating

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<sup>276</sup> “Soprattutto perche penso che ha capito che ho un rispetto e considerazione per lui.”

that “Here there are other things to consider: I mean to say, he’s willing to talk. The mafia knows everything about us, maybe even that we’re here in this moment.”<sup>277</sup> This initial meeting between the two reveals a tendency that will pervade the rest of the movie; Buscetta is often posed as an advisor and aide to Falcone, and their relationship is based on a sense of trust that drives the plot of the rest of the film and majorly contributes to the political critique offered by the movie.

To this end, the initial conversation between Falcone and Buscetta shows the two establishing their roles: Buscetta has the upper hand and explains to Falcone that they both will become celebrities with his confessions, but that Falcone is opening an account with the mafia that will only be closed by his own death. Falcone’s acceptance of this is shown in the cut to the next scene, where Buscetta is seen descending from an airplane, wrapped in a heavy blanket. This image, a reenactment of the events presented in newspaper reports across Italy on 16 July 1984, serves as an iconic affirmation of Buscetta’s collaboration as is it subtitled in a five-second freeze frame by captions that state “Buscetta is extradited from Brazil. The winning mafia continues the extermination of his family,”<sup>278</sup> upholding the division between winning (new) and losing (old) mafia as established at trial. This is a stark departure from the contemporary news reports that accompanied this photo, whose writers were unaware of the collaboration taking place behind closed doors and labeled

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<sup>277</sup> “Qui le considerazioni da fare sono altre: voglio dire, lui è disposto a parlare. La mafia sa tutto di noi, forse anche che anche in questo momento stiamo qua.”

The circumstances of Buscetta’s arrests are rarely mentioned in narratives that use him as a supporting character. In November 1983 Buscetta was arrested in Brazil for drug trafficking. He was in the company of the mafia boss Gaetano Badalamenti’s son and the dead body of a young girl was found on his land. The teenage girl had unusually high levels of drugs in her bloodstream and had died from a gunshot to the nape of the neck.

<sup>278</sup> “Buscetta è estradato dal Brasile. La mafia vincente continua lo sterminio della sua famiglia,”

Buscetta as “re della droga” (*Corriere della sera*), “boss,” and “Don Masino” (*Giornale di Sicilia*). The recreation of the image here serves to present Buscetta as dedicated to his choice to collaborate with the State, despite the consequences: transformed to an icon, the image serves to point to Buscetta’s tenacity and Falcone’s savoir-faire.

The image is emplotted within a narrative in which Falcone must consistently watch his words for fear of being overheard by the wrong person and as the target of defamatory letters that arrive on paper coming from inside the Palazzo di Giustizia. With a quick cut to the interior of an interview room, Buscetta immediately begins his discussion of Cosa nostra by premising the mafia war as one between ‘i Corleonesi guidati da Toto’ Riina’ and ‘i mafiosi tradizionali come me, Bontate, Badalamenti,’ confirming the perception of old and new mafia. Buscetta’s narrative role shows him as an expert witness. His expertise is consistently confirmed with techniques that utilize both the dramatic and documentary conventions inherent to the form: either through photographs (like that of Stefano Bontate when Buscetta speaks of him) or through linking Buscetta’s narrative to images that enact his speech, the film consistently affirms for its viewer the reliability of Buscetta.

Established as reliable, Buscetta’s role is swiftly utilized to participate in and uphold the political critique manifested on screen before his arrival. Buscetta is presented here as not merely confirming Falcone and the Anti-Mafia Pool’s hypotheses, but rather as being the source of a new comprehension of their adversary. His speech closely reflects that of the depositions as he delves into descriptions of the Cupola as the overarching structure of all crimes committed by Cosa nostra. Falcone, encouraged by his revelations, enthusiastically approaches his colleagues speaking about the vertical structure and they marvel about their ignorance of the mafia pre-Buscetta as a colleague states: “to think,



before we weren't even certain the mafia was called Cosa nostra!"<sup>279</sup> Satisfied with the early results of the collaboration, Falcone engages Buscetta in questions about the political crimes that have taken place ("La Torre, Mattarella, Dalla Chiesa, delitti eccellenti[...]") and questions why the mafia wouldn't have expected a reaction from the State, citing the Rognoni-La Torre law as a response that rendered mafia activity more difficult. Here, Buscetta begins speaking about the same "3<sup>rd</sup> level" of mafia affairs that in reality he never spoke about at the Maxi Trial. His description of a "*convergenza di interessi*" (convergence of interests) and of politicians that became "*ingombranti*" (cumbersome) not only for the mafia but for their own political party.

The next several scenes show acts of negotiation between Falcone, insistent on understanding the inner-workings of the mafia and on denouncing any politician who has dealt with the mafia "say it, even if it's the Prime Minister, say it!"<sup>280</sup> The scene calls for a renegotiation of roles as Buscetta must explain why he will not speak of politics to Falcone: Buscetta, represented as prudent and endowed with foresight, states clearly "I will not speak about politics [...] there aren't the right conditions," a statement that coincides with Falcone's continuous struggle of knowing who to trust at work.<sup>281</sup> The pair forge on, and the success of their work is evidenced on screen with the San Michele blitz and a series of arrests. Moving forward, however, Falcone continues to press Buscetta about political connections, and Buscetta reveals that he was presented to Nino and Ignazio Salvo as

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<sup>279</sup> "se penso che prima non avevamo neanche la certezza che la mafia si chiama Cosa nostra!"

<sup>280</sup> "Lo dica, anche se fosse il Presidente del Consiglio, lo dica!"

<sup>281</sup> "Io, di politica, non ne parlo [...] non ci sono le condizioni giuste."

mafiosi, and they in turn had connections with a member of parliament that Buscetta will not reveal.

Another series of on screen arrests confirm Buscetta's statement that Nino Salvo was mafioso. As the surprise arrest occurs in the middle of the night, the '*talpa*' (mole) appears as dramatic music accompanies his presence. In each scene where Falcone is given a lead that approaches the third level, an on-screen appearance suggests that his safety is at risk due to his unrelenting interest in this convergence. Furthermore, when Falcone is able to interrogate Vito Ciancimino, (who he accuses as being complicit in the 'Sack of Palermo,') and Nino Salvo (a businessman accused of arranging state contracts in favor of the mafia), Falcone questions the role of the Democrazia Cristiana (DC) in these relationships, bringing the focus to evidence of collusion and corruption between political representatives and known mafiosi.

With each success, however, Falcone is reminded of the precariousness of his position: Ninni Cassarà from the Squadra Mobile is killed in front of his wife and child after the onscreen betrayal by a colleague who eavesdrops on his phone call. Here, again, Falcone sees the image of death from the Bergman film. Riding in the back of a car with Borsellino in a heightened state of paranoia, he writes on a newspaper "*c'è una talpa*" ("there's a mole") to which Borsellino sarcastically responds "*solo una?*" ("just one?"). Immediately thereafter subtitles reveal that the two are being transferred to Asinara (a prison-island off the coast of Sardinia), and a dramatic argument between Borsellino and his adolescent daughter impresses on viewers the constant dangerous intrusion of mafia into the private lives of the investigators. The stint on Asinara, while historically accurate, is emplotted as an escape from not just the mafia, but as a protective measure that protects

the two individuals and their families from the ever-looming presence of shadowy figures that put them at risk and undermine their work. Highlighting this disjunction, Borsellino's character points out that while Toto Riina's wife gives birth in the best clinic of Palermo, the two of them must live as outlaws for their own protection.

Repeatedly, through signs that point to verifiable dates, figures, and events (like the Maxi Trial preparation and anonymous letters), Falcone is prevented from further investigating the relationship between mafia and politics. Falcone is barred from understanding what Buscetta refuses to speak about for matters of safety, but the reasons that prevent him from investigating further are not considerations of safety but considerations of protection and complicity. Made explicit through a late-night phone call to Antonino Meli, that explains he is "the only one in Palermo who can block Falcone's path."<sup>282</sup> This internal conspiracy is attested to onscreen by the meeting of the CSM where Geraci's character double-crosses Falcone and nominates Meli to the position.

With Meli in charge, Falcone discovers that the Mafia Pool has been dissolved, and that the members of the pool will be overloaded with unrelated cases. Meanwhile, in New York, Buscetta and Falcone meet again and Falcone presses him for more information on the links between politics and mafia. Buscetta, angered by the requests, tells Falcone he should be thanking him, that his reticence is the reason Falcone is still alive. He speaks to him as friend, giving him personal advice to back off for his own safety. Falcone, whose power is diminishing at work, is still the target of assassination attempts that stem from privileged knowledge from within the Justice Hall. Immediately following the discovery of a

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<sup>282</sup> "l'unico a Palermo che puo' sbarrare la strada a Falcone."

bag full of explosives on the rocks by his beach house, Falcone receives a phone call from Giulio Andreotti who mysteriously already knows of the events, followed by a cut of Falcone watching the Bergman chess game. This rapid succession of scenes leads Falcone to state that behind these events are “very refined minds, anything but mafia.”<sup>283</sup> Continuing in his quest, Falcone becomes ever surer of collusion between state and mafia, but continues to be blocked by colleagues, threats, and desist requests slyly proffered by his new boss at the Procura.

As the Maxi Trial sentences are passed through the court of appeals, Falcone is seen advocating for changes in the Justice system to allow for better protection for state collaborators, and a division between the legislative and judiciary branches of government. He is met with heated criticism opposed to fervent enthusiasm in a public forum. As he departs, he speaks with a female journalist (while not labeled as such, this seems to be the figure of Marcelle Padovani, the French journalist who interviewed Falcone for the book *Cose di Cosa nostra*) who foreshadows his destination with a significant questions: do you have any regrets? He responds twice, once off record, and the other for the record. The first response: “[the regret] of being one step from an epic breakthrough, but not succeeding in making it.”<sup>284</sup> The second: “you die when you’re left alone, when you start playing a game that’s too big.”<sup>285</sup> If the foreshadowing was unclear, the quick flash to the face of Bergman’s Death, followed by a quick cut to the road signs that indicate the Capaci highway makes clear that these two statements are the resounding message to be taken from the film.

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<sup>283</sup> “mente raffinatissime, altro che mafia.”

<sup>284</sup> “[il rimpianto] di essere a un passo da una svolta epocale, ma di non essere riuscito a farla.”

<sup>285</sup> “si muore quando si è lasciati soli, quando si entra in un gioco troppo grande.”

In the long sequence that brings Falcone and Morvillo to their deaths, the movie continues to exploit public knowledge of the Capaci bombing to create dramatic foreshadowing. As music builds, shots of mafiosi stationed around the highway reveal a great deal of preparation for the bombing. A final phone call to the a mafioso reveals the couple has left the airport and the mafiosi endowed with high-tech instruments wait for the signal. Above the body of a dead Falcone, Borsellino mourns but must break the news to Caponetto. A quick cut to raw footage of Falcone's funeral establishes that the story on screen coincides with what actually happened. The voice of Rosaria Schifani, by now infamous through her speech, begs the mafiosi to repent for possible forgiveness.

In a response to this cry for repentance, Borsellino is immediately killed, suggesting the plea was never answered. As his daughter desperately mourns, the 'talpa' arrives on the scene and tells a policeman to strike his name from the record. A freeze frame on the 'talpa's' face serves as the background for documentary style 'updates' on what has happened since the making of the film. The final text states clearly: "The Italian people are still waiting for the truth on the Sicilian attacks, after already waiting twenty-five years for [the truth on] the other attacks that bloodied Italy."<sup>286</sup> As a final message, the film bleakly implicates that, despite all the violence, sacrifice, and death seen on screen over the past two hours, the Italian State has again failed to provide justice. Falcone (and by extension Dalla Chiesa, Cassarà, Borsellino, and the many others who died on screen) are displayed as the exceptions to the rule, while the entire political sphere is accused. This film, in which Buscetta and exception individuals alone are able to recognize the role of politicians in

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<sup>286</sup> "Gli italiani attendono la verità sulle stragi siciliane dopo aver già atteso 25 anni per le altre stragi che hanno insanguinato l'Italia."

protecting and promoting mafia, uses these figures to produce and sculpt a narrative that confirm Falcone's claim that "you die when you're left alone."<sup>287</sup> It is a trend that will appear in other filmic narratives of the period, but here is utilized as a resounding political 'j'accuse' from Ferrara.

*I giudici (Cadaveri eccellenti)* (Ricky Tognazzi, 1999)

The lives of Giovanni Falcone and the magistrates of the anti-mafia proved to be interest in a transnational context by the end of the nineties, and were brought to screen again in a 1999 HBO/ Tidewater produced film starring Chazz Palmintieri as Falcone and F. Murray Abraham. The film, directed by Ricky Tognazzi, follows a melodramatic plotline, including a strong focus on elements of personal relationships, family and friendship dynamics and a strong tendency of dramatic embellishments that bring historical events into a pro-filmic and moralizing narrative.<sup>288</sup> The movie, in stark contrast to Ferrara's polemic film, diffuses the explicit critique of corrupt individuals and favors a general condemnation of 'mafia' and 'state.' In an ultimate celebration of the heroic judges of the anti-mafia, personal sacrifice is shown in detail as the plot of the film is tied to the trajectory of the Falcone/Buscetta relationship. The relationship, one in which they work together in danger to bring the mafia to justice, is depicted as extremely productive until

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<sup>287</sup> "quando si è lasciati soli, si muore."

<sup>288</sup> Ricky Tognazzi has had a substantial role in Italian contemporary cinema, he is known as an actor and director. In the same vein of *I Giudici*, Tognazzi had turned to the Sicilian magistrates' plight before for filmic narrative with the 1993 film *La Scorta*, which takes into account the lives of Judge Francesco Taurisano and the members of his police escort. Tognazzi was awarded the David di Donatello for best director for this film.

Buscetta's transfer to the United State, suggesting the limit of that relationship as a substitute for an anti-mafia culture.

Opening credits state that the movie is based on Alexander Stille's *Excellent Cadavers*, but it is strikingly different from the eponymous 2007 documentary that chronicles the period. While the 2007 version is endowed with Stille as narrator that guides the viewer through documented historical cases, the 1999 dramatic recreation of the book calls on many of the same documentary techniques but is firmly rooted in dramatic modes of narration that move the story forward. One of the most significant dramatizations to analyze is the farfetched relationship of Falcone and Buscetta on screen.

Reminiscent in style and content to a *buddy film*, of all the films analyzed in this chapter, *I Giudici* assigns the on-screen Buscetta a role as co-star. His likeness is shown on the film poster and DVD cover alongside a young Falcone. If they are linked from the premise, some significant directorial choices throughout the film strengthen this connection tenfold. I posit that the directorial choices caused Buscetta and Falcone to interact beyond the scope of their professional relationship and enter into a warped friendship in which Buscetta becomes Falcone's closest and most trusted advisor. As Philippa Gates makes mention of in the "Buddy Films" entry in *Men and Masculinities: A Social, Cultural, and Historical Encyclopedia*, the buddy film arose as a mode that "offers a space for negotiating masculine crises incited by issues of class, race, and gender through the juxtaposition of two men of differing personalities and backgrounds and their evolving relationship."<sup>289</sup> If traditionally the form was necessitated by masculine crises, I argue that

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<sup>289</sup> Philippa Gates, "Buddy Film," *Men and Masculinities: A Social, Cultural, and Historical Encyclopedia*, Michael Kimmel and Amy Aranson, eds, (ABC-CLIO, 2004), 113-114.

in *I Giudici*, the crisis at hand is no longer one of masculinity but one of legality. Through an unlikely relationship with Buscetta, Falcone is seen on screen as overcoming his adversaries by finding a worthy counterpart in his star *pentito*. Considering this relationship in conjunction with the ‘docu’ aspects of the docudrama form, I conclude that the film proposes a new narrative of the historic period in which criticism of a shameful past is diffused by a focus on Falcone as undisputable hero.

While in the other films Buscetta is given less camera time despite his role as aide, here he is a privileged interlocutor seen in scenarios either unrealistic (Falcone and Buscetta casually smoke cigarettes, discuss the Maxi Trial, and talk about whether Falcone will have children whilst saying a long goodbye before Buscetta’s return to protective custody in the US) or outright untrue (for example, in the on-screen and *in air* suicide attempt while the filmic Buscetta is initially extradited from Brazil). The impetus to both dramatize and document the historical happenings points back to the innate tensions within the genre; paradoxically the viewer is asked to suspend disbelief in front of scenes that are frankly unbelievable.<sup>290</sup> The film reconfirms the heroic vision of Falcone offered by

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<sup>290</sup> In the English version of the film, the movie immediately points to the chronicled past through the common maneuvers of locational indexicality (the film opens with images of Falcone and Morvillo arriving at the recognizable Punta Raisi airport and entering their vehicle- Falcone at the wheel- in front of the backdrop of an arid rock wall), temporal indexing (the usage of date captions alongside black and white images of the aftermath of murders of previous ‘excellent cadavers’ while the initial credits roll) and an overall focus on photographs, radio blips, and television reports that verify the ‘realness’ of the on screen evidence. However, before the opening credits, the dramatic force of the narrative is already revealed to the viewer. Upon the by now infamous explosion on the highway from Punta Raisi, the scene fades to a press conference in which the likeness of Paolo Borsellino performs a rich monologue that points to how emplotment can shape the moral narrative that ‘history’ comes to serve in docudrama. From the nostalgic music that accompanies the explosion, a recognizable figure explains to the press conference:

Giovanni Falcone was the best man this land ever had. A land blessed by God, and cursed by man. He was the best in all of us, and for that reason he was run into the ground. It seems like only yesterday he returned to Palermo to take on a routine job in bankruptcy. But it was so like Giovanni to use that position to defend his beloved Sicily against the terror of the mafia. A quiet, conscientious man would come to galvanize the nation *in a deadly fight between good and evil*.



Ferrara's movie, but does so in a context that is highly personalized and in which Falcone's enemies fall under the umbrella terms of 'mafia' and 'state'.

The Italian version of the movie opens in a holding cell, where a close frame shows Buscetta lighting a cigarette; the isolation of his mouth and jaw on screen suggests the importance of this act of speech in the narrative configuration of what is to follow. Immediately after his long (and dramatically re-enacted) description of the difficulty in strangling an individual, he claims he is not betraying the mafia, but that the mafia has betrayed him. Like in other versions of the same conversation, Buscetta claims his past as a traditional man of honor while describing the horrors of the new mafia as displayed on screen. Finally, he probes Falcone on whether or not he has the support of the State, claiming that the mafia is able to kill those that are unprotected. His initial behavior towards Falcone shows him as commanding respect and rhetorically questioning how the State will be able to protect him if they do not fully support Falcone. Falcone, despite this initial challenge, is convinced in his decision to move forward.

The first half of the film is introduced by this conversation between Buscetta and Falcone, and immediately gives way to a "Five years before" flashback that provides the background narrative necessary to understand the significance of that initial conversation. Symbolically flashing back to a scene of "la mattanza," the annual culmination of the tuna

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As he states "from only yesterday" the images shown on screen leave the conference room and show the same Falcone the viewer just saw die ascending the steps to the omnipresent Palazzo di Giustizia, an initial validation that what will be shown on screen is verified by the narrative, and the narrative is confirmed by the images. Furthermore, the description of Falcone as a galvanizing individual presents a dichotomy that will be further elaborated within the film. While the historic antagonism between Falcone and 'the mafia' is presented as one as between "good and evil" where Falcone clearly embodies good while the "the terror of the mafia" seems a clear indication of who the evil is; Buscetta's role is suspended between good and evil, and, despite its limits, is used to narratively support Falcone's goodness.

fishing season, the dramatic technique plays on public knowledge of Falcone's death and portrays him as, like the fish, unable to escape the same netting that will bring them to their death.<sup>291</sup>

Supporting this vision of Falcone as surrounded by antagonists, the first half of the movie (until his meeting with Buscetta) shows him as struggling to work productively amidst hostile colleagues, receiving threatening letters, and as in a fearful state as his colleagues die and his romantic connection to Morvillo grows, raising the stakes of his danger. The circular return to the meeting with Buscetta at the midpoint in the film marks a turning point in both characters' lives. Buscetta is given a privileged role; neither protagonist nor antagonist, he is an ethically suspended character whose narrative role is prioritized over verifiable truth. Leaving behind the evil world of the mafia through his denunciation, his passage to the world of good is facilitated if not directly caused by Falcone. His dramatized suicide attempt brought to screen marks a turning point through its marking of a commonality between the characters: both are at a point of total exasperation if not desperation when their felicitous meeting in a Roman *Questura* provides the characters with an opportunity to bring about change.

Once established that Buscetta will speak, the narrative and stylistic choices surrounding his character portray him as Falcone's main source of comradery and workplace satisfaction. In fact, the Buscetta relationship is so intense that at times the film seems to borrow from the buddy film genre as much as that of documentary. The link formed on screen between Buscetta and Falcone, I posit, has a plethora of signs that point

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<sup>291</sup> This metaphorical "mattanza" is a repeated theme across the films.

to the conception of not only mutual respect but friendship between Falcone and Buscetta. Typical of the buddy film genre, the friendship formed on screen shows two characters of similar ideologies together on screen often with a *common enemy*. The common enemy in this case is the modern mafia that has continuously evaded Falcone's attempts on screen to pin them down, the same mafia that Buscetta laments have broken every code by killing his innocent family members.

By pulling from chronicles and consistent recourse to dramatic evidence, the unlikely friendship between criminal and magistrate becomes the driving narrative force of the movie. Buscetta is given a significant amount of screen space, and his monologue that reveals the nature of *Cosa nostra* is central both in terms of narrative and images. He first enters the filmic space through a news report of his arrest in Brazil, but his role does not become decisive until several scenes later after Judge Rocco Chinnici's death and an outright fight within the Palazzo di Giustizia where Falcone vehemently defends the cases he has been working on from being transferred. Immediately thereafter, an image of an airplane backlit by a sunset informs the viewer of Buscetta's arrival while the usage of extra-diegetic news reports tells of the wall of omertà, the law of silence, and that until then it had remained unbroken. Images show Buscetta swallowing a poison in flight, being saved by an agent, and subsequently being taken to an interrogation room where he claims "voglio parlare con Falcone" ("I want to speak with Falcone").

The subsequent scenes link the viewers' discovery of the truths of the mafia with Falcone's own illumination. Buscetta speaks almost exclusively for the next minutes. While the content of his speech closely mimics that of his deposition, the addition of reenactments that confirm his story creates an indexical link between document and drama. Buscetta's

voice comes to substitute for the Voice-of-God typical of straight documentary: for each particular of Buscetta's story, an image of some sort is displayed on screen. He reveals a narrative of double-crossing and power seizures that characterized the second mafia war, and places Toto' Riina at the center of these. While this narrative would not be new to those that lived through the trial, that it is illustrated through reenactments points to not only Falcone's trust in Buscetta's story, but an implied trust between viewer and filmmaker.

Beyond the link between reenactments and Buscetta's speech, he is also shown as being a valued advisor to Falcone. In fact, in this version of events, the idea to bring mafia commission to trial as opposed to an attempt to try individual mafiosi comes from Buscetta. As he makes the suggestion, a flash of illumination crosses Falcone's face, as if a breakthrough was now imminent thanks to that sage advice. Falcone ponders: "The whole organization on trial? There's not a courtroom big enough" as the viewer is invited to join as Falcone and Buscetta chuckle with the privileged knowledge of the aula bunker that will come to be. If the viewer is not aware of the bunker to be constructed, on screen happenings in any case immediately indicate the massive nature of the revelations: not as soon as the chuckling ends, a series of clamorous arrests are seen on screen. The camaraderie between the two is presented as a dynamic that links Buscetta and Falcone under a common goal, working against a common enemy.

Buscetta's revelations here are shown as the immediate cause of the arrests. Unlike in other renderings, there is never any doubt in Buscetta's truth. Falcone trusts completely in Buscetta, while Buscetta's support of Falcone is depicted as indispensable. In the scenes that shortly follow the break-through in which Falcone changes his approach at Buscetta's behest, the movie uses indexical links to reality to situate the viewer: the date is clearly

stated, granulated images with the semblance of 1980s news reports show the series of arrests taking as an anonymous newscaster's voice provides the details of the blitz.

In a move that maintains the narrative intermingling between Buscetta's presence and Falcone's fate, a scene sandwiched between two scenes with strong indexical links (that of the Blitz, and the presentation of the aula bunker) brings him fully into the domestic sphere. The news report detailing the Blitz makes mention of the great danger now posed to the magistrates of the anti-mafia pool, making note that they will from thence forth be under police protection. As the information is broadcasted we see a woman preparing dinner listening to the TV sets, then making a desperate attempt at telephoning Francesca Morvillo. Despite the woman's attempts, Francesca and Falcone arrive at her house for dinner where she awkwardly lies about her children having a fever and needing to cancel the evening's plans. The scene underlines the personal risk and sacrifice required of Falcone, and leads to an intense argument between the couple in which Falcone reiterates that will not be stopped, citing his work with Buscetta as the primary cause of security concerns and successful investigations alike. The argument turns into a chance for both Falcone and Morvillo to reiterate their shared dedication to the anti-mafia cause and their willingness to sacrifice for their region that is portrayed as the catalyst for their wedding in the next scene. Immediately thereafter, Falcone returns to take his 'honeymoon' in the office, showing upmost concern for Buscetta's revelations and dismissing Francesca. His discussions with Buscetta drive him and are confirmed by on screen events as Falcone and Borsellino are sent to Asinara to prepare the pending trial.

While the two work feverishly to prepare the trial, the film calls on conventions of an 'inside access' piece which leads the viewer through the preparation of the trial and

shows an unnamed lawyer who explains the details of the courtroom with particular focus on its safety features. The scene is doubly-mediated: the camera points to a cameraman, slowly walking backwards as the news anchor walks toward the camera narrating the scene, microphone in hand. The emphasized presence of a multitude of cameramen and technologic equipment point not only to the hyper-mediation of the trial itself, but suggest that the filmmakers have done due-diligence in consulting the chronicles of the time period. The overall effect of the 'fact'- 'fiction'- 'fact' scene sequence urges the viewer to situate the narrative as one with the historically verifiable images. Similar in style and content to the newspaper reports on the opening of the maxi trial, the reporting quantifies the lawsuit that is being prepared on screen.

To that effect, the scenes in which the 'suspension of disbelief' required of the viewer seems a tall task to meet, narrative peculiarities nonetheless garner believability from this conventional sequencing of materials. The aftermath reveals a usage of emplotment that significantly condenses the historical events and allows the Buscetta character to remain involved in the narrative beyond the true four-day stint at trial before his return to Italy. In light of scholarship on buddy movies, Buscetta and Falcone's relationship shows them as working against a common enemy that has infiltrated all aspects of public and private life. Falcone's budding relationship with Francesca Morvillo is often relegated to a secondary role in scenes in which Falcone explains to her the dangers and the realities in his work. Finding an interlocutor in Buscetta that is acutely aware of the perilous nature of his work, the Falcone/Buscetta pairing evolves into celebration of their bond as resistance to the mafia.

This relationship is threatened and called into question a number of times throughout the film as Falcone's colleagues and adversaries raise issues of the legality and the nature of the relationship. Above all, in the scenes that present the Maxi Trial, the dramatization of historical fact intensifies the chronicled view of the trial and shows Buscetta and Falcone as contending with an entire culture of illegality. These scenes are endowed with dramatized reenactments of scenes reported from the trial: a group of females protest the pentimento of their relative, a man sternly staples his mouth closed, the courtroom setup dramatizes that which was familiar from newspaper coverage.<sup>292</sup> Calling on these memorable moments from press coverage, Buscetta's interrogation is situated amongst signs that point to the realness of the scene and his narration of the mafia gains authenticity. Likewise, his trial role is expanded and he is endowed with actions that amplify his role beyond that of state collaborator. Questions normally directed towards a defense lawyer or prosecutor are directed at the pentito, increasing his symbolic and narrative power. What was presented initially as Buscetta's genius idea to bring the organization to trial is validated and defended in front of the court by Buscetta himself as he delves into legal terminology to vehemently explain the structure of the Cupola. A particularly hostile defense lawyer (1:05) is able to catalyze an explanation of the Buscetta Theorem from Buscetta himself, and presents his character an opportunity for reasoning on the alleged differences in morals that caused him to betray the association.

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<sup>292</sup> Vincenzo Sinagra, mentioned briefly in newspaper reports of the Maxi Trial, performing actions that brought him his fifteen minutes of fame at multiple trials (stapling his mouth shut, swallowing a bed spring) indicates the presence of a desperately hostile mafia that aims to obstruct justice.

In the initial conversation between Falcone and Buscetta, Buscetta was portrayed as warning Falcone of the likely repercussions of his actions; he warned him that he would become a celebrity and that his privacy and personal life would be put in mortal jeopardy. Throughout the film, these statements are evidenced on screen and reach their apex post-trial. The trial sentencing, depicted as an ultimate validation of the work carried out by the pair, a double vindication and joint success, is quickly celebrated before Falcone's continuous defeats in its wake. Whilst celebrating the trial, Caponetto announces his retirement and claims that Falcone will make an excellent replacement in the *ufficio d'istruzione*. The next scene shows Falcone losing the vote for the position to Antonino Meli, a biographical moment becomes a sign of his defeat. This defeat immediately gives way to the culminating scene between Buscetta and Falcone, in which they stand outside the police helicopter that will take Buscetta away.

The conversation that unfolds between them shows them as sharing a mutual concern for each other, but also as recognizing that the trial was a spectacle put on by the State. Buscetta makes pointed commentary on the fact that Toto Riina was living as a fugitive for years and his wife gave birth multiple times in excellent clinics in Palermo, right under the nose of law enforcement officials. Ironizing on the persistence of mafia in Palermo, Buscetta and Falcone speak of their future plans and in a reversal of roles, Buscetta interrogates Falcone on his life on whether he plans on having kids and on how much he loves his wife, and makes a tender comment saying that's what matters most. Falcone's responses indicate that he, too, shares Buscetta's view that the State has not done enough to combat the mafia. He prophesizes on his own death, claiming he won't have kids because he prefers to bring children rather than orphans into the world. As Buscetta puts



his cigarette out and boards the plane, he stops Falcone in his tracks and says goodbye with a stern look in the eye and a heartfelt “grazie.”

This final thanks from Buscetta to Falcone marks the end of their on-screen relationship, while the next scenes reveal both the benefits and limits of this relationship. With Buscetta removed from the scenario, the final scenes of the movie are characterized by a series of significant antagonisms. Falcone, alone but for his wife (who, while supportive of her husband, does not have the same privileged narrative role that Buscetta does), is challenged by the bombing attempt at Addaura, criticism from colleagues, and leaves his job in Palermo to work in the justice department in Rome. Each obstacle represents a defeat and a further isolation: be it through his boss hypothesizing that he could have put the bomb at Addaura for publicity, or those that claim his move to Rome is a sign of giving up.

With the seven-minute sequence that ends the movie, Falcone’s death is depicted and Borsellino publicly mourns, claiming that both the State and his colleagues had begun to slowly kill Falcone before 23 May 1993. He says he will carry on his mission, even if he fears he does not have enough time. With a quick cut to original footage of the Falcone funeral, on screen text provides verification of the story told on screen: Riina’s eventual arrest, the crumbling of the Italian Republic in 1993, the Andreotti trial (and his eventual acquittal), but also the inception of the most fervent anti-mafia movements that Sicily had ever seen. As the movie closes on a still frame of a photograph of the real-life Falcone and Borsellino whispering and laughing to each other, they are credited with having inspired

massive change in Sicily (“they forever changed the face of Sicily”).<sup>293</sup> Despite the change, the movie portrays Falcone as flanked by only a few exceptional individuals in his heroic courage; none, however, compare to Buscetta, the catalyst behind his success, the wartime companion when they are both under attack.

*Giovanni Falcone, L'uomo che sfidò Cosa nostra* (Andrea and Antonio Frazzi, 2006)

In 2006, RAI 1 aired a commemorative movie during primetime made for the network; spanning the first two days of October, *Giovanni Falcone, L'uomo che sfidò Cosa nostra*, directed by the brothers Antonio and Andrea Frazzi. The movie, split into two episodes, revisits the life of Giovanni Falcone from 1980 until his 1993 death. The first episode, with a running time of one hour and thirty-five minutes, shows the origin of Falcone's conflicts, while the second episode (one hour and forty minutes), posits a resolution that never truly happens amidst continued conflict and the hero's ultimate death. The movie, listed under the genres of 'biography' and 'drama' on the Internet Movie Database (imdb.com), re-represents many of the same events and indexical links of both the Ferrari and the Tognazzi films, but does so in a manner that relies on the conventions of melodrama and merely nods to the truthfulness of the story in several moments. The movie, while maintaining strategic ties to the historical record, reveals a chronological progression that departs from the *docu* of *docudrama* and moves to the realm of *melodrama* in which Falcone's interpersonal relationships are a driving force.

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<sup>293</sup> “cambiarono per sempre la volta della Sicilia”

Departing from the stark political view of the time period, the Frazzi brothers focus on Falcone as an exceptional and heroic figure who, through continuous sacrifice, maneuvers through an emotionally driven plot. Typical of melodrama, there is a heightened call to viewer emotions as recognizable stock characters perform on screen. The stock characters of the hero (Falcone), the heroine (Morvillo), the villain (in this case a generic 'mafia'), and the faithful sidekick (Buscetta), perform on screen a narrative that closely parallels that of the sensational passage from conflict to resolution. In the performance of the narrative, in several moments a conclusion or resolution seems to be within reach, however, the ultimate death of the heroic figure suggest that resolution is never truly achieved.

Through a strong focus on the Falcone-Morvillo relationship, the Falcone played by Massimo Dapporto is constantly hyper-aware of the possible repercussions of his work. With a thick mustache reminiscent of Burt Reynolds, Falcone is depicted as a sexualized romantic hero who, despite initial resistance, conquers Francesca; in one scene, in fact, the two leave a dinner at Borsellino's house before the dinner is served after declaring to each other 'avrei una voglia' (presumably for sex) before making quick excuses and leaving the party giggling. In this role of hyper-masculine hero, in many instances his preoccupation with the safety of Morvillo causes the couple to argue, break up, return together, break up again, date again, and ultimately get married and declare their intentions to stay together as a unified front against their enemies. Through a number of scenes that are present in the other versions of the time period, the directors draw out the emotional elements in scenes that are recognizable from the chronicled history and from other filmic versions of the period. In the instance of the Addaura bombing attempts, Morvillo is shown on the rocks by

the sea, seconds from picking up a duffel bag filled with explosives with a motion-trigger that would set them off. While this scene is used in other movies to reveal a double-crossing that revealed his location, or to bolster his heroic standing, here the scene gives way to a significant dialogue between Falcone and Morvillo in which Falcone reiterates the importance of his work and Morvillo is faced with deciding whether or not the risk of being with Falcone is worth it.

With the romantic relationship that unravels between Falcone and a voluptuous Francesca Morvillo (played by Elena Sofia Ricci) established as a backdrop for Falcone voicing his fears and reiterating themes of personal sacrifice, in the second episode of the film the Buscetta character is introduced. Buscetta, too, is treated with the emotional excess of melodrama, as demonstrated by his arrest in Brazil where he is portrayed as a valiant family-man. Quite literally jumping between a gun wielded by an overzealous Brazilian cop and his young screaming daughter, Buscetta's character is immediately portrayed in the setting of his family's compromised safety, the same reason that he later utilizes as a bargaining chip for state protection upon the advent of his collaboration.

Buscetta in this film plays a role that ultimately has the same effect on Falcone as in *I Giudici*, or rather, the role that allows Falcone to reach a new level of understanding of his adversary in order to triumph over it. Of significance, however, is the way in which this relationship has changed on screen. While Falcone and Buscetta fall into the buddy roles in *I Giudici*, here their relationship begins with a voiced antagonism: Buscetta announces that he has no trust in the Italian State to which Falcone angrily replies: "let's make this clear

immediately: in here, I'm the State, *I* represent the State."<sup>294</sup> This initial clarification sets the tone for the relationship between Falcone and Buscetta, one in which Falcone is always represented as fighting for the State while Buscetta continuously questions it.

Within this melodramatic world, characterized by a heightened performance of excess that, as Linda Williams writes in her chapter "Melodrama Revised," appears to be "antithetical to cinematic realism,"<sup>295</sup> the characters on screen play out modified narratives that are potentialized through their repetitive nods to the historical record and past filmic representations as such. The narrative on screen is adapted for a mass audience, in this case as a made-for-TV production, and told through the melodramatic mode. This allows a familiar battle between good and evil to take place on screen and benefit both from the emotive aspects of melodrama and the alleged factual basis of documentary. As Williams argues, it is not necessarily true that melodrama and realism are antithetical and this reductive view of the mode does not adequately address the many complexities of the form "that supposedly realistic *effects*—whether of setting, action, acting, or narrative motivation--- most often operate in the service of melodramatic *affects*."<sup>296</sup>

Through the contribution of effect to affect, the *L'uomo che sfidò Cosa nostra* product points to the inevitable verification of this process in docudrama and full-blown melodramas alike. Through a repetitive representation of scenes shown in the docudramas, like those where Falcone and Borsellino complain about the lack of resources and support from Rome (of note: in this version, they finally get a photocopier!), or that in which

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<sup>294</sup> "chiariamo subito: qua dentro lo Stato sono io, rappresento IO lo stato."

<sup>295</sup> Linda Williams, "Melodrama Revised," in *Refiguring American Film Genres: History and Theory*, ed. Nick Browne (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 42.

<sup>296</sup> Williams, 42.

Falcone watches *la mattanza*, the scenes garner an air of credibility for their links to previous documents. The production of the realistic effects of settings, dialogue, and narrative, however are used at the service of the broader moral commentary being offered through melodramatic affect. To illustrate this tendency, the scenes in which Falcone and Buscetta are in the interrogation room are a worthwhile starting point.

The relationship pictured on screen is, initially, one of antagonism. Neither Buscetta nor Falcone trust fully in the capabilities of the other until Buscetta's statements are backed up by on-screen verifications of his truth. Within this relationship, Falcone acts out a mistrust of Buscetta, followed by an emotional outburst in which he challenges Buscetta for what seems like a lie about the existence of a fireplace in the Salvo villa. Falcone expresses his doubt, and claims that all of Buscetta's statements will be verified, which they swiftly are on screen as policemen search the house to no avail. Through this series of events in which the viewer, consistently if implicitly, is asked to identify with Falcone, the Buscetta character is proven to be a reliable narrator, but only after Falcone defends him and finds missing floor plans that reveal the existence of the fireplace. Buscetta's role, in this case, is not limited to only pushing the narration forward, but he is an interlocutor that proves the investigative and sentimental qualities of Falcone.

Within a sentimentally driven film, Falcone is depicted as a quirky genius, bounds ahead of his colleagues when it comes to understanding the mafia phenomenon. His position of genius, however, renders him a sort of outcast—he must overcome his obsessive work habits to maintain his relationship with Morvillo, and as to not push away Borsellino. This genius is manifested through a focus on Falcone as a lone figure, either late at night by himself in the *Palazzo di Giustizia* surrounded by papers and files and chain-

smoking cigarettes, or through his habitual late-night (or, in some cases, early morning) phone calls that disturb his colleagues from deep sleep as he hunts down a missing piece of information that will allow him to have a breakthrough. Furthering this sense of isolation, Falcone is consistently depicted as sadly looking over the dead body of the colleagues that he did seem to trust.

Within this melodramatic retelling of the time period, a more complex vision of the protagonist emerges in which Falcone's heroism is produced not only in his clever investigation, but also through his daily personal sacrifice. The inclusion of scenes in which he visits his dying mother (who comments on his solitude), or gets married and immediately departs to interview Buscetta in New York, or even when he brings Morvillo along to New York for their honeymoon between interrogations, depicts Falcone as so deeply entwined with his quest to defeat the mafia that the cost is paid through his unstable personal relationships. Elements of this personal sacrifice are consistently highlighted and play a major part in the heroization of Falcone as a hero against all odds.

Considering this film in light of docudrama, it is not necessary to see docu and drama as antithetical, also as it is not necessary to consider cinematic realism and melodrama in antithesis. Rather, through the combination of these elements, the film draws focus to the tensions between these concepts and shows how the two can benefit from each other. Between subjectivity (melodrama) and objectivity (a claimed source of documentaries), historical narratives are rendered in a more complex way that benefits from a variety of modes and opens them to multiple readings. The final scene of this movie, in which real footage is displayed of Rosaria Schifani addressing the mafia at the state funeral for Falcone, reveals this tendency and conveys to a modern audience a narrative of

suffering and sacrifice. Through her sobs, she pleads that “the men of the mafia, that are here in this place”<sup>297</sup> get down on their knees and repent for the pain they’ve caused. In this particularly chilling speech, at the end of a narrative in which Falcone and Morvillo are destined to die tragically, the question arises as to whether the suffering seen on screen was ever repented for.

### *Looking Forward*

On September 14, 2018, filming was set to begin for a feature film directed by Marco Bellocchio entitled *Il Traditore*. The title traitor is none other than Buscetta, and this is the first film where he is protagonist. Bellocchio, when interviewed in *Il Corriere della Sera* described his vision of Buscetta as “[a] repentant criminal that could be the antihero of a melodrama. A man on the run [...] a traitor that disavowed the pact of *omertà*, opening a fatal passage for the investigations of Falcone and Borsellino,” and goes on to explain that “betraying is not always an act of dishonor, it can be a difficult, courageous choice.”<sup>298</sup> He ascribes to the vision of Buscetta as part of “an old mafia with a code of honor” but views his choice as both self-serving (*ha paura*) and to correct past errors (*si ravvede*).<sup>299</sup>

While the film has yet to be released, Bellocchio has already revealed that he subscribes to Enzo Biagi’s vision of Buscetta: “I agree with Enzo Biagi, who had interviewed

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<sup>297</sup> “gli uomini della mafia, che ci sono qua dentro”

<sup>298</sup> “tradire non è sempre un’infamia, può essere una scelta difficile, coraggiosa.”

“criminale pentito che potrebb’essere antieroe di un melodrama. Un uomo in fuga [...] Un traditore che ha rinnegato il patto di omertà, aprendo un varco fatale per le indagini di Falcone e Borsellino”;

<sup>299</sup> “una vecchia mafia con un codice d’onore.”

Giuseppina Manin, “Bellocchio: ‘Il mio Buscetta sarà un antieroe da melodramma,’” *Il Corriere della Sera* (Milan), July 29, 2017, last accessed October 31, 2018, [https://www.corriere.it/spettacoli/17\\_luglio\\_30/mio-buscetta-sara-antieroe-melodramma-715c903c-7480-11e7-9773-4a99982cbf04.shtml](https://www.corriere.it/spettacoli/17_luglio_30/mio-buscetta-sara-antieroe-melodramma-715c903c-7480-11e7-9773-4a99982cbf04.shtml).



him: I don't know if Buscetta told the whole truth, but what he did say was true."<sup>300</sup> When it comes to truth, the director seems intent on providing his own truth through this narrative, and has already made directorial decisions that reveal possible inklings of docudramatic conventions: in both the casting and locational choices Bellocchio harks back to familiar scenes from Buscetta's life. In the role of Buscetta is Pierfrancesco Favino, but before this was decided Bellocchio stated: "I'd need a Marlon Brandon, Godfather version [...] I need to find a knowing face, able to pass for a 50-70 year old, and with the charisma of the *legend*."<sup>301</sup> Bellocchio, despite his apparent subscription to the dominant myth of Buscetta, claims he will use the opportunity to speak on large scale treacheries by exploring the idea of "traitor" in the movie, repeating the story of Buscetta's trust in Falcone:

And he finds Falcone to be an interlocutor that he trusts. But Falcone too comes to be betrayed, killed. Buscetta goes forward, attacks the strong powers, pointing to Lima and Andreotti as political reference points for the mafia. Acquittals and statutes of limitations cover everything up. Therefore, who is the true traitor? Buscetta or Riina? The mafia or the State? There are many betrayals.<sup>302</sup>

While this heroicization of Buscetta by Bellocchio has already been critiqued as "un'occasione persa" (a lost opportunity) by Pietro Orsatti on the AntiMafia DueMila website (published by the Associazione Culturale Falcone e Borsellino), the conception of

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<sup>300</sup> "sono d'accordo con Enzo Biagi, che l'aveva intervistato: non so se Buscetta ha detto tutta la verità, ma quello che ha detto è la verità"

<sup>301</sup> "avrei bisogno di un Marlon Brando versione Padrino [...] devo trovare un volto vissuto capace di passare dai 50 ai 70 anni, di avere il carisma della *legenda*." Manin. Emphasis mine.

<sup>302</sup> "E trova in Falcone un interlocutore di cui si fida. Ma anche Falcone viene tradito, ucciso. Buscetta va avanti, attacca i poteri forti, addita Lima e Andreotti come referenti politici della mafia. Assoluzioni e prescrizioni insabbieranno tutto. Chi è quindi il vero traditore? Buscetta o Riina? La mafia o lo Stato? I tradimenti sono tanti." Manin.

Buscetta still seems to prove a powerful node through which the past is evaluated.<sup>303</sup>

Perhaps this is why Bellocchio initially seems to cling to the image of Buscetta as charismatic mafioso of the old guard, to open up new readings of the historical period in which Buscetta's is contextualized as yes, a traitor, but a useful one, one that allows the viewer to ponder the nobility of his choice in the larger scheme of political and judicial betrayals and back room collusion between the power holders of the Republic. For Orsatti, Bellocchio has been taken prey by stereotypes and risks "trivializing, exactly because he depends on a stereotype, a figure that goes far beyond his simple belonging to *Cosa nostra* and his *pentimento*, or better, his collaboration with Italian and U.S. justice." <sup>304</sup>

While it really is too soon to say, it does not seem that Bellocchio will drastically modify the narrative that the other films that include Buscetta present. Be it through the choice of settings (scenes will be shot in Brazil, Miami, Palermo), casting calls in Sicily, Favino as Buscetta (pictorial indexing), the narrative he will offer already seems to be built at least partly upon the conventions of docudrama. The final message of the film is to be determined once it hits cinemas, but for now news articles and online discussions from the announcement of the film in 2016 to the present day reveal one larger truth: decades beyond the events told in these films, there has never been a lapse in production. The

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<sup>303</sup> Pietro Orsatti, "L'occasione persa da Bellocchio nell'affidarsi allo stereotipo del Buscetta traditore eroico," *Antimafia Duemila*, May 19, 2016, last accessed October 31, 2018, <http://www.antimafiaduemila.com/home/rassegna-stampa-sp-2087084558/114-mafia-flash/60405-l-occasione-persa-da-bellocchio-nell-affidarsi-allo-stereotipo-del-buscetta-traditore-eroico.html>

<sup>304</sup> Orsatti. "banalizzando, proprio perché si affida a uno stereotipo, una figura che va ben oltre la semplice appartenenza a Cosa nostra e al suo pentimento, o meglio alla sua collaborazione con la giustizia italiana e statunitense."

territory is still ripe for analysis of the past, and the docudrama genre is omnipresent in contemporary visions of a history still being written.

## *Conclusion*

In this brief conclusion, I would like to return to the first question asked by this dissertation: Why Tommaso Buscetta? As I've aimed to show, Buscetta matters, not only because of his exceptional choice and deposition, but as a token through which to understand cultural, social, and political discourses surrounding the Mafia in the 20th Century. Beyond this unique field of organized crime, however, the Buscetta narrative and its expansion across media allows for deeper understanding of the constructed nature of public discourses. By focusing on the singular figure of Buscetta, I was able to pinpoint key moments in this multivocal and pluriannual character construction, honing in on the literary and media processes at play.

With the approach of isolating key moments in the character construction, I sought to understand whether the processes at play varied drastically, or if there was some hidden communality at their center. A number of tensions arose in an initial uninformed reading of my primary text selection, and that which interested me the most was that between the personal model of storytelling (with all its caveats of subjectivity and personal memory) and the seemingly more sober discourses tied to the historical record. I aimed to understand how these tensions were treated, and ultimately, I argue, veiled through unique genre based techniques. Across the primary texts, I discovered a continuous veiling of the border between the unique fields representation (or rather, how texts portray criminals) and formulaic and 'sober' approaches to writing, reporting, and retelling a story of national and international importance.

In the first chapter, which is a premise and starting point for the following chapters, I discuss how literary models ultimately inform Buscetta's self-fashioning. By tracing the development of the mafia myth from its inception, I aimed to draw out continuities between Buscetta's deposition and a stagnant vision of the mafia as protectorate that emerged during the sociological inquests into Sicily upon the birth of the Italian nation. By discussing first how this myth was related to sociological inquiries, and then was developed through literature, I found that the autobiographical act was imbued in the same tradition, and caused Buscetta's deposition to read as a construction of a positive and folkloric monument to the self and to an anachronistic mafia.

In chapter two, still concerned with these ideas of mythologies and representation, I turned my attention to Maxi Trial portrayal in the printed press. Working with the idea of celebrated criminality and Robin Hood criminals, I aimed to understand the complex discourses surrounding Buscetta and the Corleonese mafia at trial. Through my analysis, I saw Buscetta as being a pivotal character through which the mafia myth was continued in a crucial moment in Italian history. While many of the tropes of the mafia were originally confined to the constraints of the literary, the trial could have been a significant moment to start questioning these constructions. Instead, trial coverage across the press reinforced, above all, the idea of a temporal division between an innocuous past mafia and a modern, gruesome devolution of previous honor.

Continuing with this thread of representation, in chapter three I examined three co-produced texts in which Buscetta's personal life became the focal point. By pairing these texts with theories of coauthorship and celebrity, I determined that the coauthors ultimately authorized Buscetta's version of history. Through the interview and

collaborative process, sociologists and mafia experts alike entrusted themselves to the *pentito*, allowing his vision of the past to stand in for critical (and juridical) analysis of his statements. Typical of celebrity biographies, Buscetta's self-rendering was protected by his interlocutors; in lieu of any formal education on the topic, his life experiences constituted his role of mafia expert. In the case of Biagi's *Il boss e' solo*, Buscetta's descriptions of his mafia and his choices to leave it *precede* the conclusion of the Maxi Trial. With this constant blending of personal and political, Buscetta's story is not unique to the celebrity biography genre: for this reason, it offers an opportunity for analyzing how formulaic representations (in this case, based in the mafia myth) inform public opinion and understanding across the board.

In my reading of docudramas made upon the death of Giovanni Falcone, I considered the effect of the Buscetta narrative as it made its first cinematic appearances. With Ferrara's 1993 *Giovanni Falcone* instapic, I saw that Buscetta's story was largely taken at face value and became a way through which Falcone as national and sacrificial hero could be bolstered. This, of course, was not the only film that features the Falcone-Buscetta pairing, and so an analysis of their joint appearances allowed, again, for a reflection on tensions between representation and history. Through a consideration of generic tendencies of docudrama, I was able to understand how the figure of Buscetta in its various iterations inform viewerships ideas of Falcone as a melodramatic hero at odds against not only a corrupt faction of society but also against his own colleagues.

The self-rendered Buscetta expanded across media and became a recognizable token for evaluating the efficacy of Italian justice and politics between 1986 and 1992. By tracing the commonalities and differences in narratives from different time periods, I

aimed to show that similar and culturally embedded notions were at the basis of his own monument to the self, notions that in turn were focal points for others to evaluate his role.

In this work, many issues of sustained global importance come to light: the role of the press, justificatory self-produced mythographies, and the celebrification of criminals consistently inform (oftentimes in a veiled and formulaic manner) our media landscape. It is essential to critically assess and question the validity of stories we see in print and on screen to assess the driving ideologies behind them. While in my dissertation I focus on the figure of Buscetta, I believe that the methodology used here could be applied to any range of newsmaking individuals or groups. A common catchphrase in 2019 is that 'Representation Matters,' and while this phrase is usually intended to push for greater visibility for the underrepresented, it also points to the fact that representation speaks deeply, connects to systems of power already in place, and therefore should be treated with extreme care and consciousness.

While I have looked at Buscetta mainly from a concern of representation and its tensions with historical truth, there are countless albeit divergent approaches to these primary materials. Many of the sources I worked with were available only in archives in Italy, and in the Italian language; through my research and translations I sincerely hope that the Buscetta monument is opened up to further analysis. His story is steeped in many disciplines, and could provide fruitful readings from perspectives of gender studies, transnational cinema, and media studies.

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